

C. 175. m. 36.

PALMIRA
AND
ERMANCE.

PALMIRA

ERMANO

PALMIRA
AND
ERMANCE.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. MEEKE,
AUTHOR OF
COUNT ST. BLANCARD.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE, AT THE
Minerva-Press,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVII.

CCM 2

1504503

— 100 —

119 06 02 07 08



Bvery
con
inju
from
liste
roo
of t
ring
of t
v

PALMIRA AND ERMANCE.

CHAP. I.

BERENGER and de Virnay had been very much puzzled to discover what was become of Bazile : notwithstanding the Duke's injunctions, they had patrolled the house from top to bottom in search of him, and listened at every door but the one of the room where he really was—made enquiries of the servants the moment they were stirring ; but not being able to learn any tidings of the lost sheep, were in deep debate whe-

ther they ought to proceed to Paris without him or not; and had finally determined, for very good reasons, not to visit the capital but in his company. As their promised pleasure depended upon the absent Bazile, their joy was unbounded when they saw him enter their room, and each eagerly enquired where he had been, and what had befallen him? Bazile, seriously angry, accused them of cowardice for leaving him in the manner they did; had they assisted him to rise, instead of keeping him down by running over him, he should not have been known. Now he did not know what might be the consequence of their silly frolic. The Duke de Civrac had recollected him, and dragged him by main force into his room, and had been lecturing and preaching to him till he fell asleep, when he had made his escape unperceived; but he still dreaded what might befall him if he was missed, and the Duke came in search of him.

Berenger

Berenger and de Vernay defended themselves ; if they had known what had detained him, they would have forced the great man's door, let what would have been the consequence—ne'er a Duke in the kingdom should have kept him in custody against his will while they had a drop of blood in their veins. They could not see what right he had to assume such an authority over him ; had they been in his place they would have plucked up a spirit, and have let the Duke know who he had to deal with.

Bazile was easily convinced his dear friends were not to blame, and now affected to bluster ; saying, if he had not been so much in liquor, the Duke would not have found it such an easy task to master him ; however, he wished they were off ; the diligence would be very late in at Paris ; but there was not much chance of the Duke's being stirring yet awhile.

"The horses will be put to precisely at six," said Berenger; "and though the Duke is a c—f—d early riser, he won't be up so soon."

"Would to God, my dear friend, you had his fortune, and he was in the work-house—then you would both be provided for!—but what have you to fear from the proud Don?—But rather than you should be exposed to any more of his preaching, if you think there is any chance of his coming down, we will walk forward till the diligence overtakes us."

Bazile approved of this motion.—The surgeon and his nephew had slept very sound, notwithstanding the noise Bazile and his companions had made when they first retired to rest; but the joy Bazile's return occasioned was so vociferous, it awoke Vanval, who thus overheard all their discourse, and learnt the fright they had been in: he was very near bursting out a laughing several times, and did so when he found how they intended to make their exit; therefore, not chusing to afford

afford him any more mirth, they left the room, and continued their conversation under the gateway, ready to start the moment they heard or saw any thing of their tremendous enemy.

René, the Duke's valet, was punctual as clock-work, and was at his master's door by a quarter before six: he tried the lock, and finding it give way, advanced towards the bed where Adolphus lay in a profound sleep; he was very loth to disturb him, yet dared not disobey his orders. The moment he was sufficiently awake, Adolphus asked what o'clock it was? then told René to call the gentleman in the other bed. He instantly obeyed, called first without side the curtains—no one answered:—"Shake him," said Adolphus; "he was rather in liquor when he went to bed, therefore probably is in a sound sleep." René now assured his master there was no one there; the Duke, highly amused when he reflected how cautious Bazile must have been to have made

his escape unheard, told the valet he had been disturbed by a gentleman he knew, and who had, at his desire, taken possession of the other bed, but presumed he was in haste to pursue his journey; he very soon dressed and walked down stairs, at the foot of which stood Bazile and his friends; the former was so earnest in discourse, giving Berenger the heads of what the Duke had said, that he did not hear his Grace, who was at his elbow. Berenger exclaimed—“D—n the moralizing fellow! would—— but Bazile having caught sight of the very person upon whom this polite epistle was bestowed, started back several paces, and the alarm soon became general; their hats were all off in a moment, and Adolphus stood a few seconds contemplating their woeful countenances; then, without speaking, or taking the least notice of them, he crossed the gateway into the room, where he had been told Vanval slept. The surgeon was finishing his toilette when Adolphus entered; not chusing to speak before a third person,

Adolphus

Adol
pany
as fo
door
key-
cove
almo
mod
“yo
prai
Dul
taki
cul
cur
from
int

val
fel
his
ad
an
ti

Adolphus intreated Vanval would accompany him into the garden for a few minutes, as soon as he was dressed. Coming to the door, Bazile, whose ear was applied to the key-hole, could not make his retreat undiscovered by the surgeon, though he skipped almost to the foot of the stairs: "For so modest a young man," said the surgeon, "you are very anxious to hear your own praises, Mr. Bazile," making way for the Duke to precede, and following him without taking any further notice of the confused culprit, who had turned his back, though curiosity, added to a dread, prevented him from leaving the inn as he had at first intended.

As soon as they were out of hearing, Vanval told the Duke he had almost stifled himself, only a few minutes before, to conceal his mirth at Bazile's account of his night's adventures: they had not time to enter into any details, as the diligence horses were putting to. Adolphus, therefore, just entreated

the surgeon, in the Receiver General's name, to discover, if possible, where Bazile took up his abode at Paris, and what stay he proposed to make; assuring him both himself and Mr. de Melac wished very much to have seen him over night, but the unexpected arrival of some very old and very dear friends to both, had prevented them from having that pleasure.

Vanval, naturally very curious, longed, yet dared not ask any further explanation of this mysterious speech; promised to be very attentive to Bazile's movements; then advised his Grace, who, he thought, looked fatigued, if he was not in any particular hurry to pursue his journey, to take a few hours repose before he set out.

Adolphus promised to follow his friendly prescription; and having renewed his invitation to the hotel de St. Firmin, took leave of the honest Flamand. He went in search of Bazile, who had returned with his party
into

into their room, and were debating whether they had better set off on foot ; for, notwithstanding the Duke had not taken any notice of him, he could not flatter himself he had not seen him ; and he was all anxiety to learn what passed between him and Vanval ; he was certainly giving the surgeon instructions to write to his father, and he knew what he had to expect in that case. His two friends, however, raised his spirits, by persuading him it would be no difficult matter to prevail upon Vanval to keep the secret ; naturally avaricious, a few presents would make him as silent as the grave ; and they both agreed and advised Bazile to treat him with the utmost politeness during their now short journey, that they might bring him into good humour. As their door was a-jar, and they all in turn took a peep, they saw the Duke and Vanval take leave of each other, and the former returned up stairs ; they therefore instantly advanced to meet the surgeon, and began to apologize for disturbing him.

“ I am used to have my rest broke, gentlemen, therefore forgive you ; but I think you might have had rather more consideration for the Duke de Civrac, knowing he was so much indisposed yesterday, that he was obliged to lie down in the middle of the day.”

“ We were certainly very much to blame, my dear Vanval, but positively had not the slightest intention to disturb the Duke ; pray what did he say ? did he seem very angry ? I am really very sorry I left his room ; but you know the diligence might have set off without me.”

“ Very true ; I know also how much excellent advice has been thrown away upon you, Mr. Bazile, for I heard all you said to your friends when you first came down : had I been in the Duke's place, I would have thrown you all three over the bannisters, or have kicked you down stairs, had you disturbed me as you did him ; however, I believe he has washed his hands of you, Mr.

Mr. de Melac. His regard for your father induced him to endeavour to bring you to a sense of your folly; you have convinced him you are incorrigible; therefore, depend upon it, he will never again trouble his head about you, or take the least notice of you. He asked no questions about you, he only wanted to consult me about his health; and I think it very possible he may be a severe sufferer through your last night's frolick."

Bless me! I should be sorry, my dear Vanval; but did not he say he was surprised at meeting me here, and at my travelling in the diligence?"

"Your actions, young gentleman, have long ceased to surprise either the Duke or me; and I am certain he would not even have mentioned your names, if I had not brought up the discourse, by saying, you and your companions had been so riotous, I had not been able to get a wink of sleep till his Grace had separated you, and frightened

Berenger and du Vernay out of their few remaining senses."

"You must excuse us, my good friend, we had no intention either to disturb you or the Duke; we understood our prudish companions, the old nuns, slept in that room, and only wished to frighten the poor old pious souls a little."

"Did you alledge this kind intention to his Grace, in extenuation of your fault, Mr. Bazile?—But here come the ladies, who would, no doubt, think themselves very much obliged to you, were they acquainted with the visit you intended them; which, providentially for their sakes, fell to the share of one who knew how to treat you."

A summons to ascend their vehicle put a stop to the conversation. Bazile and his friends were never more pleased than when they turned their backs upon St. Juste, as they now began to entertain some hopes of reaching Paris without seeing any more of the
the

the Duke. They arrived in that gay metropolis between six and seven that evening, and no sooner reached the Fauxbourg, than they forgot all their past misfortunes, in the anticipation of the pleasures they hoped to enjoy, by frequenting the various places of amusement Paris abounds with, and which Bazile's late residence there had made him perfectly acquainted with.

CHAP. X.

VANVAL, anxious to execute his commission, and particularly wishing to oblige the Duke de Civrac, and his old friend, tried, by distant hints, during their journey, to discover where Bazile and his companions meant to take up their abode; but, prepared for these enquiries, the three friends merely gave him to understand, they were going upon a visit to a relation of du Vernay's, the St. Omer's clerk. This brilliant thought was the production of Bazile's prolific brain, who fancied himself a second Machiaval in contrivance; and was firmly supported in the idea by his two friends, who enjoyed the thoughts of thus cleverly misleading the surgeon; but they ought to have

have reflected, Vanval was too well acquainted with the Berenger family and connections to credit so silly a tale, fabricated to deceive him : with the most ironical *sang froid* he said, out of regard for their souls, he would cease to question them then, but must excuse him if the late mystery he saw they made of their place of abode, led him to form conjectures not very much to their honour.

Bazile affected to laugh ; and, by way of softening his past folly, said, “ to be very honest with you, friend Vanval, we have not decided where we shall fix our abode ; we are going to sup at a friends of mine, with whom I shall, most probably, spend great part of my time ; therefore if I do not accept the kind invitation I have received from Mr du Vernay at an apartment at his cousins, I shall look out for a lodging near my friend ; but do give me your direction, as I shall pay you an early visit, and shall then

then be able to inform you where you may find me."

Bazile would not have been thus polite, if he had not reflected Vanval would return to Dunkirk before him; and he wished very much to engage him to keep his secret; writing he knew was not the surgeon's *forte*, as he had often heard him declare, he would sooner, humanity apart, perform one of the most difficult operations belonging to his profession, than write a letter to one of his best friends; he therefore knew he had nothing to fear, till he had it in his power to give his father a verbal account of his journey; and a few presents he thought would effectually stop his mouth.

Vanval readily obliged him, by telling him Julien and himself were going to an old friend in the *Rue des Bins Enfants*, a surgeon of some note, and with whom Julien was to board while he prosecuted his studies, and walked the hospitals.

Bazile

Bazile could scarcely contain his joy to find the surgeon would be at such a distance from where he meant to take a lodging, having already determined on one in some of the various *hotel Garnies* the *fauxbourg St. Germain* abounded with.

At the *bureau*, or inn where the diligence put up, they all took a polite leave of each other. The surgeon, while Bazile and his friends were retaining their baggage, and signing their names in the police-book, (kept wherever stages stop) stepped out, and, being better acquainted with Paris than Bazile, soon met with one of the Savoyards with which this capital abounds, who ply at the corner of every street, and at the gate of every great hotel, to run of errands, black shoes, sweep chimnies, &c. and are as renowned for their honesty as dexterity in their various employments;—his intelligent countenance convinced him he could not have chosen a more proper emissary; he therefore ordered him to watch the three friends, till they were housed

housed for the night, and then to come and let him know where he could find them ; by this means, the surgeon was able to trace them to a small hotel in the *Rue Jenezon*, where he learnt they had taken two rooms by the week ;* and had, in answer to the customary enquiries, told the master they were come to Paris in search of pleasure. Thus far Vanval had executed the commission he had received from the Duke ; and determined, fraught with this intelligence, to pay his Grace a visit the very next morning.

Adolphus, having heard the diligence set off, returned once more to bed, and, his rest having been so much disturbed,, and quiet now established in the house, soon fell into profound sleep ; and did not awake till his father, ever anxious for his health, came to his bed-side. The Duke wished to have

* Formerly every stranger was obliged to write his name and reason for coming to Paris in a book submitted to the inspection of the lieutenant of the police.

retired

retired without awaking him, and was making his exit on tip-toe, when Madame de Neufpont called out from the gallery, "Is that lazy Adolphus stirring, Duke? or does he mean to keep us waiting breakfast for him till noon?"

This speech made him start up; and the Duke, really angry with the gay Marchioness, returned to the bed, and enquired how he found himself! adding, he was afraid he had been disturbed in the night as his mother and himself had heard some drunken people making a noise in the gallery.

"I certainly heard the party you mention, my dear sir; but can assure you I never was better in my life: Indeed I have almost forgot I ever was ill; and the various sensations I experienced last night, have completely effected my cure."

He

He now hastened to dress, and soon joined the happy party at breakfast. The noise in the gallery became the subject of conversation; and Madame de Neufpont declared she had been seriously alarmed, till her woman, whom she had made get out of bed to see if the room door was properly fastened, had assured her the Duke de Civrac was up, and threatening the rioters to fling them into the court if they did not desist.

"Your Abigail rather exaggerated my threats, Marchioness," said Adolphus; "I civilly requested the gentlemen would walk down stairs, and they obeyed me with such promptitude, they gave me no reason to proceed to acts of violence."

Having finished their breakfast, and the carriages being in waiting, the Duke and Duchess, Madame de Neufpont and Adolphus proceeded in the Marchioness's coach, missed the diligence by taking the other
road

road into Paris, and arrived at l'hotel de St. Firmin about seven o'clock ; the Marchioness did not alight, but promised, at their joint request, to return with the Marquis to supper, if she found him at home.

The Duke now learned the hotel de St. Piene had remained unoccupied since the Marquis de St. Hermoine had left it ; the old porter, and some of the ancient domestics were its sole inhabitants ; but thither the Duke and Duchess resolved to remove as soon as their son married.

Adolphus, immediately upon their arrival, set out in quest of the old Marquis, whom he found at home, and who was, as usual, very happy to see him, and readily consented to return with him to supper, as he wanted no greater inducement than the idea of spending the evening with Madame de St. Piene, for whom he entertained the highest veneration ; and as he certainly had in many respects, behaved well when de Joinville's

Joinville's execrable plot, had induced the Marechal de St. Firmin to exile his son-in-law. The Duchefs had forgiven him the part he had taken in her father's deception, and had even overlooked his unwillingness to part with his honours and estates in consideration of his age and behaviour; and more particularly from the love he displayed for his darling Adolphus, even during his infancy.

The Marquis was now very old and feeble, and his sight began to fail, but his memory was still retentive: he entered the room where the Duke and Duchefs were sitting, leaning upon the young Duke's arm, and paid his compliments to his dear niece, as he always called Madame de St. Piene; but while addressing the Duchefs, he could not help eyeing the stranger, who was now talking to Adolphus: and having wiped his eyes, and put on his spectacles, soon recognised his long-lost nephew, whom he welcomed to Paris with the most heartfelt joy; and

and expressed his sincere regret, that he had for so many years enjoyed what he had so little right to; however, to make him and his son all the reparation now in his power, he assured the Duke he would leave him every farthing he possessed; repeatedly declaring, he would never have connived at the Marechal's deceptions, if he had not thought them calculated rather to restore than injure his peace of mind. Though excessively anxious to learn what had befallen his nephew during his unjust exile, he had so much to say in his own defence, that he allowed the Duke no opportunity to answer his repeated questions; at last his Grace entered into a short detail highly gratifying to the old man, who was still lost in wonder and amaze, when Mr. and Madame de Neufpont were announced.

The Marquis had been formerly very intimate with the Duke, and their marriages had increased their friendship. Mr. de Neufpont was an amiable character, gay, frank,

frank, and conversant, fond of his wife, and sensible of his duties to his children; an excellent officer, and very much esteemed by all who knew him; thoroughly capable, therefore, of appreciating the exalted motives which had parted the Duke and Duchess de St. Piene, he had often declared he hardly knew which most to admire; his congratulations upon their re-union were the result of his feelings, and sunk deep into the Duke and Duchess.

The alteration in his daughter's prospects were also mentioned; and he expressed as much pleasure at Madame de Neufpont had done, that Ermance had made such an impression upon the young Duke; declared himself seriously hurt at the folly of Agnes, the more so, as he held the whole fraternity of friars and nuns in utter detestation; acknowledged he might be wrong; but even Agnes, behind a grate, would no longer be half so dear to him.

As

As both he and the Marquis de St. Hermoine were anxious to see, the one his favourite friend, the other his much injured nephew, restored to all his former honours, they both enquired when he meant to go to Versailles? and it was agreed they should accompany him and Adolphus thither the very next day after the Duke had paid his mother a visit.

“ I can’t say I am sorry the Dowager has lived to participate in the general joy,” said the Marquis de St. Hermoine, “ and must say I believe she is a true penitent.”

“ We will not give way to disagreeable retrospections, my dear uncle :—‘ to err is mortal, to forgive divine’—says a British author I often perused with pleasure during my abode in Guadaloupe, where I studied that language, as being particularly useful in the line of life I had adopted.”

The Marquis de Neufpont protested, much as he admired the Duke’s fortitude

and exemplary conduct, he was convinced he should never have imitated either; for upon Joinville's horrid fabrication being confirmed by Madame de St. Pien, he should have put a pistol to his ear, and thus have deprived himself of the years of happiness he trusted still awaited the Duke. It was late before this happy party separated; and early next morning the Duchess set out for the Val de Grace, to prepare the Dowager Madame de St. Piene for her son's visit. She had never seen her mother-in-law since she became acquainted with the part she had acted, and to which she, with so much justice, attributed all her subsequent misfortunes—yet she had always rather encouraged her son to overlook her errors, in favour of her relationship to his father, and was pleased to find that the respect he felt for the title she bore, induced him sometimes to visit her retreat; yet while the painful suspense he had so long endured concerning his father's destiny continued, he could not absolutely forgive her criminal behaviour, but was now,
like

like his amiable mother, very ready to bury the part in oblivion.

The Duchess Dowager was astonished when her visitor was announced, and still more so when she learnt the joyful event that had brought her, and actually fainted when assured the Duke not only forgave but sincerely pitied her past sufferings. She was but just recovered when the Duke made his appearance; and by his kind soothing expressions almost reinstated her in her own esteem. She then protested she would give up her jointure that very day; a mere trifle would suffice for her present wants: she dared not have made the offer to the Duchess, so early in appearance a widow through her crimes, or to her beloved grandson; but she hoped her son would accept it as some atonement. The Duke would not hear of it, and advised her to bestow in charity whatever she found she had to spare. Penetrated with admiration and maternal tenderness, which for the first time found its

way into her bosom, the Ducheſs promiſed to be guided in every reſpect by his ſuperior judgment; and after intreating, as the greateſt favour ſhe could aſk, to ſee him now and then, ſuffered the happy pair to depart, and founded a maſs that very day, to be ſaid in the church of the Val de Grâce, in commemoration of her ſons, (to her miraculous) reſtoration. On their return to l'Hotel de St. Firmin, they found Meſſ. de Neuſpont and St. Hermine waiting to accompany the father and ſon to Verſailles, where they arrived ſooner than they expected. The Duke de Civrac was never reſuſed a private audience; and though he had not, according to the eſtabliſhed etiquette, made his firſt appearance upon his return to Paris publicly in the circle, he was immediately admitted into the royal preſence, met with a moſt gracious reception, and ſoon related his affecting tale, which the generous Monarch liſtened to with the utmoſt attention; then ſent him in queſt of his father, adding, with a ſmile, the *Comptroller-General* had

ſeveral

omised several times assured him the *Receiver-General* of Dunkirk was one of the best informed men in the kingdom. Such praises were truly flattering to the happy Adolphus, who soon introduced his father, and had the supreme pleasure of seeing him welcomed, as he deserved, by his truly august Sovereign, who desired his Grace to re-assume his long dormant title, as his estates were already in excellent hands. The Monarch then bestowed the most flattering encomiums upon the young Duke, and finally reverted to several memorials respecting the finances the Duke de St. Piene had drawn up during his residence at Dunkirk. By the desire of the Comptroller-General they were to be canvassed in the council the next day, and the Duke was most graciously requested to attend; highly honoured by so flattering a mark of consideration, the father and son took their leave, and returned with the Marquis's de Neufpont and St. Hermoine to Paris.

c 3

The

The Duke de St. Piene's return was now publicly announced throughout his son's household; but as most of them were acquainted with their master's eventful history, which they had learned from the ancient domestics, still members of the family or resident at the Hotel de St. Piene; they were the less astonished at the news; and, sincerely attached to their young master, they all, more or less, appeared to participate in his felicity. Madame de St. Piene was already impatient to be introduced to her two daughters, and intreated her husband, during the course of the evening, to send for them immediately to Paris: much as his Grace wished to gratify every desire his amiable wife could form, he could not make any alterations in his Dunkirk household, till another Receiver-General was appointed in his stead: nor could he, of course, remove his daughters for the present, as Madame de Franval was left as a sort of deputy in his absence; besides, he had many things he wished to arrange before they left Flanders.

ders. The Duchefs had too high an opinion of her husband's judgment to attempt to remonstrate: ſhe felt the propriety of his reaſons, and had been too long accuſtomed to make her wiſhes ſubordinate to her duty, both as a wife and mother, to expreſs the diſappointment ſhe felt on this occaſion.

Vanval called, as he had intended, in the morning, and was told by the porter his maſter and Mr. de Melac were juſt ſet out for Verſailles. The ſurgeon was angry with himſelf for having made it ſo late, but he wiſhed to be genteel; he hardly knew what to do, till the porter reminded him he had better leave his buſineſs in writing, or call the next day, as he did not ſuppoſe either his Grace, or Mr. de Melac, would be at home early enough to receive any viſitors that evening; to have gone away without leaving ſome account of having executed the commiſſion he had received, might imply neglect on his ſide, he thought; he herefore went into the porter's lodge, and wrote a very

few lines to his old friend, and gave him Bazile's and his own address; he then went home, in hopes of seeing or hearing from the Receiver-General. This note was delivered as soon as the father and son returned; and the Duke determined to make his old friend acquainted with the alteration that had taken place in his name and rank, the very next day; but he had so many things to do in the morning, and so many different orders to give, it being necessary he should resume his former state with his title, that he had not a moment to dedicate to the surgeon before he set out for Versailles. Adolphus accompanied him as it was a court day, and necessary he should shew himself in the circle. The Duke de St. Piene was immediately admitted to his Sovereign's presence; and as a small recompence for his past and unmerited sufferings, was decorated with the *Gordon Blea*, or order of the *St. Esprit*, the first in France; and further, as his known abilities, and superior knowledge, fitted him in every respect for so important a trust, he

was

was nominated *Minette des Affaires Etrangères*; which place had been vacant near a month, and was ordered to take immediate possession of the *hotel* annexed to, and all the other etceteras. Thus honoured by his Sovereign's favour and confidence, the Duke joined his son in the circle, and received the congratulations of many of his former, and a vast many new friends, upon his recent promotions. He did not return to Paris till very late in the evening; and the pleasure the Duchess expressed to find his exalted merit had at length, in some respects, met with its reward in this world, gave him courage, he said, to enter upon his arduous office; he was of course excessively busy for some days; so much so, that notwithstanding his wish to see Vanval, and learn, if possible, through him, how Bazile went on, and whether he was still in Paris, he could not spare a moment either to devote to his friend, or those enquirers; for his duty to his King and country took the lead of every other consideration.

CHAP. III.

VANVAL began to think his note had not been delivered, or he should certainly either have seen his old friend here, or received an invitation to the Hotel de St. Firmin: each succeeding day brought with it a fresh disappointment; he therefore hardly knew how to act, and began to think Mr. de Melac was either returned to Dunkirk, or was gone to some country seat of the Duke de Civrac, on the other side of Paris: however, he determined to pay one more visit to his Grace before he left the metropolis, wishing to discover what could have caused this neglect, and to him, strange
behaviour,

behaviour, after all the civilities he had met with from the Duke, and friendship from the Receiver General; besides, he had a vast deal to say about Bazile, who had been ten days in Paris, and had nearly expended all his money; he called upon Vanval most days, but never chose to say where he lodged; and as the surgeon had made the discovery, he never put the question to him.

Soon after their arrival, he made the old man a present of a very handsome gold-headed cane; entreating him, at the same time, not to mention their having seen each other to his father when he returned to Dunkirk. The old surgeon laughed in his sleeve at his folly, accepted his present, and assured him, if his secret was not already discovered, it was very safe for him; but desired him to recollect the intimacy subsisting between the Duke de Civrac and his father, and whether it was not very likely, and more than probable, his Grace might write the Receiver General word of his frolic at St.

Juste, except he had already, or intended to bribe his Grace to secrecy.

Bazile affected to laugh at these hints, and each day told the surgeon he believed he should set out the next ; but the next came, and he repeated his former declaration ; his two disinterested friends proved to him so clearly a day, more or less, now he was at Paris, could make no difference. Could he but have wrote to his father, he should have been much more at his ease ; but the post-mark would reveal what he so much wished to keep a secret ; and he could not devise any means of getting a letter put into the post at Havre before he reached that city. His friends, however, were never at a loss to quiet his fears ; and when he did write, it was only wondering his father had not answered his first letters, which must have miscarried ;—pray who was to discover this little finesse ? and suppose his father had wrote to enquire the reason of his silence, his relations would only expect him the sooner, and

and would certainly not think of writing to Dunkirk till they saw him. These excellent reasons had their due weight ; indeed Bazile was ever easily persuaded to do what was most agreeable to himself ; he therefore allowed the time to slip away in a series of continual dissipation, and often forgot both Dunkirk and its inhabitants.

Adolphus was nearly as anxious as his father to see Vanval, for whom he entertained the highest esteem, and to learn what was become of Bazile ; but he was so able an auxiliary, his father, at his own request, had kept him in almost constant employment.

During this interval, the Duke had been entreated by the Comptroller General, with whom he was still very intimate, to nominate some one *capable* of succeeding him in the post he so lately held ; his Grace selected a very reputable Flamand, with whom he had become intimate during his residence in Flanders. This Gentleman, who now held
a small

a small post under government at Paris, and was highly flattered to find himself thus promoted and noticed by the Duke de St. Piene, who chose to make him acquainted with his family history to engage his confidence, and induced him to act as he should wish upon his arrival at Dunkirk.

The Duke wrote a long letter to Madame de Franval, desiring her to resign his house, and every thing else belonging to him, such as horses, carriages, &c. to Mr. Annelly, the bearer of his arms. The clerks and servants were all to retain their respective posts, or be discharged, as they chose; and she was to set out immediately for Paris with his two daughters, and Madame des Ormes, who was to be put in possession of the elegant little villa whither the Duchess had retired upon her supposed widowhood, and where she had constantly resided till her son went into the gens d'armes.

He

He entered into no details concerning himself; merely said, a far more lucrative situation had been offered him, which he had some notion of accepting, but wished her to assign no other reason for his leaving Dunkirk to his Flemish friends, save that the climate of that part of France did not agree with him, and he was going farther southward; and she might give his daughters the same reason for their removal.

Mr. Annelly was even scrupulous in obeying the Dukes orders; his arrival caused no small consternation and regret in his Grace's Dunkirk household: however, the behaviour of their new master, soon reconciled them to parting with their old one. Ernestine and Clemence were astonished at first, but their wonder ceased, when they reflected upon the intimacy subsisting between their father and the Duke de Civrac, to whose wish to promote the interest of the former, they solely attributed their impending journey. They prepared, without reluctance, to quit a city

where they had not formed any friendships likely to make them regret their removal to a farther distance.

The Duke was now quite settled in his new habitation ; and having put all his business and family affairs *en train*, entreated Adolphus would send for his old friend, whom he wished to receive *sans ceremonie*, to convince the honest Flamand he still held the same place in his estimation and confidence ; but rather astonished when he learnt he had not called the second time, and was half afraid he was returned to Dunkirk, offended at the apparent neglect with which they had treated him. Adolphus said he would wait upon him the following day, and bring him to sup *en famille* ; anticipating in his own mind the worthy surgeon's surprise, when he discovered his old friend de Melac in the Duke de St. Piene, whose promotion he might have heard of, but not of the peculiar circumstances attending it.

Between

Between twelve and one Adolphus arrived in the *Rue des Bon Enfans*, to the no small satisfaction of Vanval, whose most sanguine hopes had never led him to expect his Grace would have honoured him with a visit, though he had flattered himself he should have received an invitation to dine or sup at his hotel. Adolphus apologised to him in the politest manner for not having called upon him sooner; assured him business of the utmost importance had alone prevented him, and was rather astonished he had not repeated his visit at the hotel de St. Firmin, where he must ever be a welcome guest; then proceeded to tell him he should call for him in the evening, if he had no previous engagement to prevent his supping with him and his old friend. Vanval felt too much flattered by this invitation, to make the slightest objection; he then wished to enter into some details respecting Bazile, but Adolphus entreated him to reserve all he had to say about the wild youth till evening; assuring him Mr. de Melac would be very much

much gratified by the interest he had taken in his son's proceedings.

At the appointed time Adolphus called for the surgeon, who was adorned in his best scarlet suit for this distinguished visit. As he was perfectly acquainted with Paris, and knew his way to the hotel de St. Firmin, he was rather astonished when he perceived they took a different road ; curiosity induced him to say, " Are the servants going right, your Grace ?"

" Our friend does not reside with me, sir," said the Duke ; " we are going to sup with him at his hotel."

The surgeon was, in some respects, satisfied ; yet *his hotel* rather struck him, though he presumed the Duke meant the one he lodged at, as he knew Mr. de Melac had not a house in Paris ; yet, reflecting he had taken up his abode at the hotel de St. Firmin upon his arrival, what could have induced him to have changed his quarters ; it was

was pretty evident the Duke and he had not quarrelled. These various reflections fully occupied him, till they reached the Duke de St. Piene's present abode. The magnificent appearance of the house, which was very discernable by the light of the lamps, increased the perplexed surgeon's astonishment. This was no *hotel Garnie*; it was, most probably, the residence of some of the superior farmer generals, with whom de Melac was intimate.

Adolphus, who had watched his looks, was highly amused. They both alighted, and as the young Duke did not stand upon ceremony, no questions were asked either by himself or his servants; without speaking, he led the planet-struck surgeon through a most noble suit of apartments, very elegantly lighted, towards his father's private study: in one of the anti-rooms they met a servant out of livery, to whom Adolphus said, "is your master returned from Versailles?" knowing his father was to spend the day there. He was answered in the affirmative; and
the

the servant was preparing to precede and announce Adolphus and the surgeon, when a look of the former made him understand it was not required ; he therefore retreated, and they went forwards.

Vanval, though lost in wonder and amaze, dared not make any remarks. At last Adolphus stopped and rapt at a door ; “ come in,” said a voice from within.

“ Oh, Parbleu !” said the surgeon, “ I know that voice ; I began to fear, your Grace, I should not see my old friend at last.”

Adolphus smiled while he opened the door, and desired the surgeon to walk in. The honest Flamand, eager to see his friend, made no scruple of preceding him upon such an occasion, but hastily advanced into the room, and almost as hastily retraced his steps, and even jostled Adolphus, who was behind him shutting to the door. The Flamand’s looks were strongly expressive of disappointment,

ment, as he saw only one person in the room, seated at a desk, apparently very busy writing, whom he was convinced was not his old friend de Melac.

The fact was, Adolphus had purposely brought him an hour before the Duke expected either, as it had been agreed he should received him *sans ceremonie* in one of the dining rooms; the Duke by no means wishing to dazzle his old friend by the necessary splendour of the appearance it was incumbent upon him to make when he attended his sovereign in council; but Adolphus particularly wished to surprise his father before he could have time to undress, guessing what an effect his blue ribbon, diamond star, &c. would have upon the petrified Flamand, who stood motionless, and even open-mouthed, just within the room.

His Grace was sitting with his back to the door; and when he called "Come in,"
concluded

concluded it was only one of his secretaries whom he had sent in search of something, therefore neither moved nor turned his head; when the surgeon once more, upon a sign from Adolphus, ventured to approach him, but made such a sudden start back again, upon the Duke's saying "have you found it, Guiscan?" Perfectly recollecting the voice, yet unable to believe his eyes, that Adolphus burst into a violent fit of laughing. The Duke, of course, turned round to see from whence this unexpected fall of mirth proceeded, and instantly rose upon seeing de Vanval, and advanced towards him. "Good heavens! my old friend, I beg you ten thousand pardons, I really thought it had been my secretary. Why this ceremony, My Adolphus? (turning to the young Duke) why ask admission where you are always such a welcome guest?"

Vanval looked very steadfastly at his Grace for some minutes, and then at Adolphus; but was not able to speak for half a minute

or

or more, till the Duke took his hand, and again entreated his pardon.

“Parbleu!” said the surgeon, “I begin to fancy I am in some enchanted castle, or else there has been some wonderful changes since I saw——”. The surgeon recollected himself, fearful of being too familiar, and thus went on:—“I can’t suppose I am in a dream; yet I begin to think, my dear sir, you have been a strange imposter during your residence at Dunkirk.”

“I hope I shall be able to clear up every thing to your satisfaction before we part, my good old friend; but how have you been since I last saw you at Amiens?”

“I can’t be mistaken, my dear sir,” replied Vanval; “your present kind condescension convinces me I am in the presence of my amiable friend; whoever you are, or whatever your present name is, I give you joy from the bottom of my soul; if these are recent promotions, as I am convinced no one can be more deserving of every honour

honour our sovereign has it in his power to bestow."

"Your compliments are truly flattering, my dear Vanval; believe me you have often been the subject of my thoughts; but positively since my arrival at Paris, my time has been too fully employed to permit me to attend to any duties but those of my office."

During this speech, Vanval was surveying the Duke from head to foot; a blue ribbon and red heels were two such positive marks of distinction, he was still very much at a loss to guess how his former friend had thus suddenly come to the possession of the one, and be entitled to wear the other. The Duke guest his thoughts, entreating him to be seated; and, taking a chair, as did Adolpnus, near him, he related in a few words as possible his eventful history.

The good old Flamand shed tears of joy several times during the recital; and when his Grace concluded, congratulated both

father
am no
count
thoug
and l
wide c

He
lated
fured
know
but t
he co
with

"I
rank
the k
impe
your
upon
escap

"
man
"ju
vo

father and son in the warmest manner. "I am no longer at a loss, your Grace, to account for your behaviour at Rosebrugge, though it puzzled me excessively at the time, and led me to form many conjectures very wide of the truth."

He then, at his Grace's request, recapitulated all he knew concerning Bazile, and assured the Duke he was, to the best of his knowledge, still in Paris, as he had seen him but the day before; "and I am convinced," he continued, "he is perfectly unacquainted with your Grace's recent adventures."

"I mean to keep him in ignorance of my rank a short time longer; indeed I am afraid the knowledge of it will merely increase his impertinence. But I still stand in need of your assistance, my good friend; for depend upon it, I don't mean his late freak shall escape unpunished."

"Your Grace might always have commanded my best services," said Vanval; "judge, therefore, if your present condes-

cension is likely to abate my zeal ; only let me know your wishes, and depend upon my conforming to them in every respect."

" You see Bazile daily, I think I understood, and have some reason to suppose his cash is nearly exhausted. I gave him a hundred Louis when he left Dunkirk, which, I presumed, would have been sufficient, with what money he had by him, for a month ; as he was going upon a visit, and to a house where there was not the slightest chance of his being at any expence ; however, from his mode of travelling, and his having, no doubt, become Paymaster-General, he can't by this time have much left, and you are, in my opinion, the only person to whom he could apply with any hopes of success, for a supply of that necessary article. If I should, which I am very much inclined to believe, prove a true prophet, offer him a sufficient supply to carry him to Havre, and from thence home ; but make him give you his word of honour he will set off the moment

he

he receives it, or else assure him, you will write to me immediately ; for I would not have you give him the slightest hint I have left Dunkirk. As for his two low companions, let them get home how they can, though they have probably taken care of that matter ;—but let me intreat you would see he leaves Paris alone, and takes the direct road to Havre. Buy him a cabriolet ; tell him you have made the purchase for yourself, but will lend it him to perform this journey,—as I should not chuse he should alight from a stage-coach, because the family he is going to visit are rather in a high line as merchants. If he attempts to borrow money for his companions, calculate how long they will be returning to Dunkirk on foot, and allow them thirty sous a day for their travelling expences.”

The surgeon was excessively pleased, and only hoped they would put him to the test, shewing his Grace the present he had received to shut his mouth ; spoke of Bazile's companions,

companions, to whom he wholly attributed this journey, in the terms they deserved.

The Duke smiled at the good man's vehemence, and said, "A few days ago I had some thoughts, as he is in Paris, of placing him at * *St. Lazare* for a few months, but I have altered my intentions at the request of his generous brother. As Adolphus had left the room when Bazile became the subject of conversation, the surgeon had an opportunity of saying much more in his praise than he dared otherwise have done, and of relating several generous and charitable actions which had come to his ears after the Duke had left Dunkirk."

"I assure you, my dear Vanval," continued his Grace, "I thought heaven had made me ample amends for all my past sufferings, and even for the follies of my youngest son, when I discovered I was the father of the Duke de Civrac! Each succeeding day,

* A sort of Prison for undutiful children.

may I might almost say each revolving hour, adds to my affection for him, and makes me more sensible of such a blessing! but I will introduce you to his mother, and when I tell you they are the counterpart of each other, I think I need not say any thing further in praise of Madame de St. Piene."

Vanval, fearful of incommoding his Grace, would fain have taken leave, but the Duke would not suffer him. He soon finished the memorandums he was making, and then accompanied him into the saloon. Madame de Neufpont was the only stranger, and had been excessively amused by the description Adolphus had been giving him and his mother, of Vanval's behaviour and surprize. The Duke introduced him to both ladies as his most intimate Flemish friend, with many very flattering eulogiums, highly gratifying to the honest surgeon, who felt himself particularly distinguished, when he understood Mr. Aurally and himself were the only two entrusted with his Grace's family history, and future intentions respecting Bazile.

The amiable Duchefs, who had learnt the latter was in Paris, wished very much to have had him sent for, and offered to become answerable for his future good behaviour; but the gentleman gave her so little encouragement, she determined not to interfere between him and his father, convinced the Duke de St. Piene was the last man in the world to have recourse to severity, where gentle methods were likely to be equally successful.

Adolphus sat Vanval down at his lodgings, after having made him promise to call upon him frequently during his short stay, and sup with him the Sunday following. Vanval observed the time he had intended to stay in Paris was very near expired, but a few days more or less were of no consequence, since his place was so ably supplied during his absence by Mr. Bertrand, to whose care he had committed his patients.

CHAP.

CHAP IV.

BY this time Bazile and his companions had visited every place of diversion Paris affords; and being undecided, on the very evening Vanval spent with the Duke de St. Piene, what to do with themselves, Bazile recollected he had not yet taken them to any of the gaming houses in the vicinity of the Palais Royal, and which he had often frequented during his former stay at Paris, and, like all young beginners, had sometimes been successful.

In the morning he had counted over the remains of about a hundred and twenty

D 4

Louis,

Louis, the stock he possessed when he left Dunkirk, and found they were reduced to seven, and a few six livre pieces; a fresh supply would therefore be particularly seasonable, and he recollected he had always been very lucky at faro—had frequently won fifty Louis in a few minutes—and even half that sum would now serve his purpose, as he meant to set off in two days at farthest: he did not absolutely communicate his intentions to his friends, but determined, if fortune proved favourable, to turn his back, as speedily as possible, upon them and Paris. They had drawn upon him pretty freely; and as his purse grew light, he reflected they had taken greater liberties than they ought to have done, both with him and his money. These reflections, however, came too late to be of any service to him; and as he did not feel inclined to quarrel with them, he asked them to take a turn in the Palais Royal, as he wished to shew them how the bucks of the capital spent their evenings. They, ever eager in pursuit of diversion, readily agreed to

to his propofal, and foon entered one of the gaming houfes numerous in that quarter. Play was began, and every thing feemed to go on very fair in the opinion of Bazile and his friends: the former's fingers began to itch, and at laft he faid he would juft try his luck, but only take three chances, win or lofe. This excellent refolution was noticed by fome of the players—particularly the banker. Faro was the game; and as Bazile had hitherto always won at firft, he ventured five Louis upon the *figure*. This once his accuftomed luck forfook him: exceffively mortified he had it not in his power to not double his ftakes, as he found Dame Fortune was not very favourable to him, he faid he would only risk one Louis the next time—equally unfortunate! and one of the by-ftanders obferved he had loft *twice* out of his *three* times, therefore had better make it double or quits; for it was always his maxim to win the horfe or lofe the faddle. Bazile, breathlefs at his repeated misfortunes, and not very much inclined to follow the excel-

lent advice he had just received, had his purse allowed him the option, his two friends looked very black, though they little thought one Louis alone remained in Bazile's purse. Berenger sighed, and said let me try for you next time, perhaps I may be more fortunate. Willing to retrieve his loss any how, if possible, with a heavy heart Bazile delivered up his remaining stock of gold, saying, if you are not more fortunate than I have been I will not hazard a sous more :—he kept his word, for Berenger was equally unsuccessful ;—not to win once out of three times, was being terribly out of luck, and began to have their doubts whether all went on so fair as they had imagined : the other friend was sure he should be more fortunate, and asked Bazile to let him make one trial of his skill ; “ try for yourself,” said Bazile pettishly, “ I never like to break my word.”

The three friends left the room, and were no sooner out of hearing, than they began to curse all gaming-houses ; “ but I would
have

have taken one more chance," said Berenger;" they would have let you win next time. The mighty secret now came out ; " I have not left another louis in the world."

His two disinterested friends looked aghast at each other for some time on this unexpected intelligence, till Berenger broke the silence, exclaiming, " not another louis ! why, what are we to do then ? and how are we to get home ? but you can certainly have what money you like upon applying to some of your friends."

" You are sensible I don't wish any of my father's acquaintance to know I am in Paris," said Bazile ; " and I question, if I were to apply, whether any one of them would lend me five louis ; you two must pay what little matters we owe, and I will return it you when I get home."

" I have but thirty livres," said Berenger.

" And I have not half so much," said the other ; " as Mr. Bazile engaged to pay every thing, I did not load myself with money."

“ Why, we owe more than we have all got for lodgings,” said Bazile ; “ what must we do ? ”

“ Sell your watch,” said Berenger.

“ But what will my father say to that expedient ? ”

“ Oh, you may very easily account for its disappearance ; you lost it out of your room, had your pocket picked, or was robbed on your return home ; any one of these excuses will pass current.”

“ It was my mother’s, and of such value, that I am convinced my father would advertise it, or take such effectual means to discover what was become of it, I should certainly be detected.”

They went home in very low spirits ; none of them had a friend to apply to in this dreadful dilemma : they held a council, and agreed, if no other means could be thought of, the watch must be pawned, and the two friends were to send the money to redeem it before Bazile returned to Dunkirk ; by which

by which means he would have it to produce upon his arrival.

Bazile had his doubts whether they would be able to keep their words, admitting they were so inclined. They each sported a watch, though of no value, yet he thought they might sell for enough to carry them home; and he offered to replace them when he returned from Havre: he had a few little trinkets he meant to part with to enable him to perform his intended journey in the diligence; and from Havre he would write to his father for a fresh supply, under some pretence or other.

His two friends were, however, absolutely averse to parting with any thing of their own; and Bazile perceived they would not make the slightest sacrifice to oblige him; excessively piqued, he had half a mind to set off in the morning with the few livres he had remaining, and leave them to pay the lodgings, and get home as well as they could.

He

He almost came to this resolution during the night, only he was at a loss how to get away his baggage : however, after breakfast, he told them he would call upon Vanval and see if he would supply them with a trifle.

The disinterested friends made an exact calculation of what would be necessary for the three, and protested Bazile must run every risk to extricate them from their present embarrassments ; their times were expired, and they might lose their places were they to stay any longer in Paris.

Bazile was seriously angry, but kept his thoughts to himself ; he certainly had engaged to defray their journey to and from the capital, but not to provide lodgings, &c. for them during their stay, and hitherto they had not spent a sou. He desired them to take a walk while he went to Vanval's, directing them to some distance that he might not find them at home on his return ; having come to a determination, if he could not
borrow

borrow a sufficient sum of the surgeon, to take what is called French leave, and oblige them to have recourse to the means they wished him to adopt.

Not having any suspicion of his real intention, they sallied out together; Bazile sent them quite an opposite way, and hastened to the surgeon's, whom he found at home. His looks almost announced his errand; but as he had but little time to spare if he put his plan into execution, he immediately requested Vanval to favour him with a private audience, and told his melancholy tale.

Vanval enjoyed his motivation, and when he ceased speaking, said, "I hope you want a sufficient sum for all three, or perhaps to make your companions a few more presents?"

"No, indeed, my good friend, if you will only lend me enough to pay our lodgings and my own journey, I don't mean to intrude any further upon your goodness."

The

The surgeon secretly applauded the notion of paying for the lodgings, and asked him what sum would be sufficient?

"A hundred and fifty livres will quite set me up, as I mean to travel in the diligence."

"I don't approve of your intentions; the son of Mr. de Melac ought not to make use of such a conveyance; he would be seriously offended was he to know you made so shabby an *entrée* into Havre; it would be a disgrace to both your father and relations. I am convinced you received very different orders from Mr. de Melac when you left Dunkirk, and were amply provided with money."

Bazile acknowledged he was, and mentioned how his father intended him to travel; but what was to be done? perhaps he should be able to hire a carriage of some sort within a few posts of Havre, or might say his own had broke down.

“ I mean to purchase a cabriolet for my own use,” said Vanval ; “ and I should not mind returning in a stage coach to oblige your father ; but I am afraid, if I was to lend you my carriage, you would sell it and spend the money during your stay at Havre.”

Bazile’s eyes glittered with delight, while he made a thousand protestations ; the surgeon cut him very short.—“ You need not waste so many words, Mr. Bazile, for if you play me false, I am always at a certainty of being repaid by your father, and thanked for my kind attentions ; the cabriolet, therefore, shall be ready in three hours ; I know where there are plenty to be had, and I will advance you a sufficient sum for your present wants.”

Bazile, overjoyed at his almost unexpected success, thanked the surgeon in the warmest terms, but entreated he would still keep his secret, assuring him that would be, notwithstanding

standing his present distress, the greatest obligation he could lay him under.

“ Only keep your word with me, young gentleman, and depend upon my discretion ; remember in three hours you are to be ready to set off.”

Bazile paused, and reflected his friends would be returned by that time, and he should not be able to get off as he intended. He frankly acknowledged how he meant to have served them, and only wished he could devise some plan to enable him to get rid of them without being obliged to quarrel ; though he protested he meant to drop Berenger's acquaintance, as it was he who had totally led him to undertake his journey to Paris, and involved him in his present difficulties.

Vanval found Bazile was deficient in spirit and recollection, therefore told him if he meant to be guided by him, he would take
every

every thing upon himself; "go home," he went on, "tell your *agreeable friends* you did not find me within, and leave the rest to me."

Bazile wished to know a little more, and would have told the surgeon where they lodged, but he hurried him away promising to be punctual to his appointment.

Bazile spent the greatest part of the three hours in rambling about; when he reached their lodgings, he found them just returned from their walk, each anxiously waiting his arrival, and very impatient to learn what success he had met with. Bazile's looks convinced them he had failed before they made any enquiries; they merely said, you have been a long while;—"I had half a mind not to have come home any more," muttered Bazile."

"What, the stingy old rascal would not lend lend you a single louis I suppose," said Berenger; "well, never mind, we will find
some

some means of revenging ourselves when we return to Dunkirk ; but what did the old hunk say ? ”

“ I have not seen him, though I know he was at home. ”

“ The old curmudgeon is offended, ” said Berenger, “ we never told him where we lodged. ”

The friends now once more began to calculate how much it would be necessary to raise upon the watch, for that was become a matter of course ; but Bazile was spared making them any answer by the arrival of the surgeon, who dashed into the court of their hotel in a very handsome cabriolet drawn by post horses.

“ Why, how the d-v-l, ” exclaimed Berenger, seeing Vanval alight, “ the old surgeon, as I am alive ! where is he going ? or how came he here ? how came he to find us out ? — he is going home I would lay my life, and

that smart vehicle is a present of the Duke de Civrac's."

His harangue was interrupted by the entrance of the surgeon. Berenger, who had opened the door for him, affected to be very happy to see him. "I have no time just now for compliments, young man," said Vanval; "accident made me acquainted with your place of abode, and I am come to take my leave of Mr. de Melac: have you any commands for Dunkirk, sir?" turning to Bazile."

"What, are you going off immediately?" interrupted Berenger;—"and alone!" said his friend—as the same thought had struck them both at the same moment.

Bazile wished to fathom the surgeon's meaning before he answered, and Vanval thus went on:—"Monsieur de Melac was the person I addressed, gentlemen."

Bazile, were much at a loss, said, "my family do not know I am in Paris, Mr. Vanval,

Vanval, therefore I dare not make you the bearer of a message to any part of it ; I mean to set out for Havre to-morrow morning, and shall write to my father from thence."

"And pray how do you mean to perform your journey?" said Vanval.

"I have not yet decided."

"Then, as one day can't make any great difference, step into my carriage, and I will convey you some part of your journey, and you may ride post from Abbeville to Havre."

Bazile thanked the surgeon, and said he should be very happy to avail himself of his kind offer."

"Then make haste," said Vanval, "or I shall have to pay the post horses double for waiting, and that won't suit me ; Paris is dear enough without flinging money away."

"Very true," said the two disconsolate friends, wishing they could meet with a similar offer.

"Would

“Would not your carriage hold three, my old friend,” said Berenger, “we should be company;—as we all arrived together, suppose we contrive to return together; my friend here can follow us in the diligence, which sets out to-night, and take Mr. Bazile’s place at Abbeville.”

“A most excellent arrangement, Berenger; however, I don’t chuse to break down my new carriage; accident made us companions in the stage, not choice on my side; for I am very much of opinion you two young men prevailed upon my worthy friend’s son to undertake this journey without his father’s consent; and by this time that good man is, no doubt, very anxious to hear from him; and should he discover, which he most probably will, where he has been, and in whose company, the blame will fall upon him, not his interested advisers. I am very glad he has accepted my proposal; if he had **not** been so inclined, I should certainly **have** thought it my duty to have informed

formed his father where I left him, and who were his companions."

During this time Bazile was putting his clothes together, and very soon told the surgeon he was ready.

"But you don't mean to set off," said Berenger, "without fulfilling your engagements?"

Bazile looked at the surgeon.

"Well, Mr. Bazile, what are these engagements? I suppose you have not paid your part of the lodgings; come, make haste."

Bazile sighed, and stammered out "I have no money left; do, my dear friend, lend me a trifle."

"Pray how did you mean to reach Havre?—but how much will do? I believe I have a few livres more than will carry me home."

"We owe fifty livres for lodgings," said Bazile.

"What else?"

"I

"I paid for every thing else as we had it," said Bazile.

"You paid, and I suppose you must give something to the servants—your share will be twenty livres."

"I agreed to pay all," said Bazile.

"Very generous indeed, sir; thank heaven I have no extravagant sons; so, I suppose, as you had no money left you meant to have borrowed of your companions, or to have run away without paying; however, it shall not be said my friend's son was worse than his word to any man, and if I am in want, I know where to borrow; there are sixty livres, that is paying as Mr. de Melac ought to do; so call the porter to put your baggage into the carriage, and let's be gone."

Bazile did as he was ordered, and the surgeon followed him into the court. Just as he was stepping into the carriage, Berenger caught hold of him, and took him on one

fide ; “ what would you have me do said Bazile ? you heard what Vanval said.”

“ Leave your watch,” said Berenger, “ or we shall not be able to get home,”

“ You must pawn your own,” said Bazile.”

The surgeon, guessing the purport of Berenger’s discourse, called out he would not wait. Bazile, therefore, disengaging himself from his friends, ascended the vehicle, and was followed by the surgeon ; his companions very much disappointed, now exclaimed he did not behave to them as a gentleman ought to his friends.

“ Parbleu ! you are very right,” said the surgeon ; “ had he treated you as you both deserve, he would have left you long since to have paid for yourselves. I am convinced you are two mean, low, designing, pitiful fellows—drive on postillion ;—not one farthing more shall you have of him, if I can prevent it ; and you may remain at Paris till the day of the resurrection before I would

would advance either of you a livre."—
Away they drove, leaving the friends in the
utmost consternation, looking at each other.

"There," said the surgeon the moment
they were without the gates of the hotel ;
" I have relieved you this once, and when-
ever you fall into such company again, I
hope you will be ten times more punished."

Bazile was profuse in thanks and protes-
tations ; then asked Vanval if he was really
going back to Dunkirk ?

" No, merely to see you safe off the stones,
as my being with you may prevent the two
scrubs you have just left from attempting to
pursue you." He next gave him a suffi-
cient sum of money for his journey expences
during his stay at Havre, and to bring him
home to Dunkirk.

Bazile was astonished at the surgeon's ge-
nerous behaviour, and protested he would

repay him every farthing, with interest, in less than three months.

Within a mile of the Barriere, Vanval left him to pursue his journey solus, which he did in excellent spirits, and determined to be more cautious in future, and no longer to associate with such needy Parasites as Berenger and his brother clerk.

Vanval, highly pleased to think he had succeeded so well, returned to his lodgings.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

VANVAL dressed and proceeded to the hotel de St. Firmin. Adolphus was at home, and very happy to see him ; laughed him out of scruples and fears respecting his father's greatness, and took him to dine with him at his hotel.

The intelligence he was the bearer of respecting Bazile, was highly satisfactory to the Minister ; and Vanval felt himself gratified to find it was still in his power to be of use to his *old friend*, and to think he was in the confidence of one of the first men in the kingdom.

Ermance was now daily expected by father, mother, and lover, for such Adolphus felt he was ; but unfortunately the indisposition of Madame de l'Ecluse had hitherto prevented them from leaving Bourbourg : each day brought the Marchioness a letter from her sister, in which she regularly hoped to be able to set out the next, but a relapse as regularly prevented her from daring to leave her chapter-house.

On the day Bazile left Paris, the Marchioness, as usual, heard from the Abbess, who now assured her that, on account of an impending ceremony, it would be impossible for her to leave Bourbourg before the end of the ensuing week.

Madame de Neufpont lost all patience upon receipt of this letter, and declared she would set out in search of her daughter the very next day. She was encouraged in this resolution by the Duchess, who perceived these

these repeated disappointments were very severely felt by her beloved Adolphus.

A young nobleman who happened to be present when Madame de Neufpont received this last letter, immediately offered to be her *chevalier d'honneur* upon the occasion, and she declared she would take him at his word, as she knew it was not in her husband's power to leave Paris just then. This gentleman was a near relation, and heir to the Neufpont title and estates, in default of male issue, a slim, elegant little figure, and allowed to be one of the completest *petits maitres* Paris afforded; very partial to the company of ladies, whom he made it his particular study to please, when he thought them either of rank or fortune sufficient to entitle them to his notice. He had inherited a very large estate from his father, and moved in the first circles; particularly gloried in a title he had very little pretensions to, that of *une homme a bonne fortune*; gave into every folly fashion autho-

rised; and had sometimes the superlative honour of being called the handsome *polisson*, by ladies of the first distinction. Such at seven-and-twenty was the Count de Selicourt. The Marquis and Marchioness de Neufpont were more diverted than hurt by his follies, and had a much higher opinion of him than he really deserved, as they had once intended him for Ermance; but the Marchioness, though she laughed at his absurdities, soon determined not to unite her daughter to a coxcomb of any rank; yet as he was an agreeable companion, she readily accepted his offer to attend her to Bourbourg, and her impatience induced her to set off, escorted by the elegant fop, the following morning.

The Duke de St. Piene had not been many days in the ministry when he was asked by one of his colleagues in office, the Prince de Montfermeil, whether there was any truth in the report that had got abroad, that

that Madame de Moncove meant to take the veil?

“Such is her determination then, Prince, much to the regret of her family, and those who have had the advantage of being acquainted with her.”

“And is there any reason short of madness given for so absurd a determination? was not she to have been your Grace’s daughter-in-law?”

“It was the wish of the Duchefs and her mother, and my son was willing to oblige them both, therefore consented to the arrangement.”

“How does he bear his disappointment?”

“Oh, with true heroic fortitude,” said the Duke, laughing; “for he never was introduced to the self-devoted nun, so can’t possibly be enamoured with charms he never beheld.”

“Very true, your Grace; there is not a man in France I have so high an opinion of as of the Duke de Civrac; he was kind

enough to take a nephew of mine, the Chevalier de Rosanne, under his immediate protection, and his excellent example has wrought a thorough reform in his manners and conduct; and the chevalier, both in his letters and conversation, mentions your son's name with every eulogium due to what I call his *rare virtues*. I protest I believe my daughter has disposed of her heart in his favour, merely from her curious animated description of this all-accomplished youth, for such he still is to you and me Duke; but, without fancying myself partial, I do think my Seraphine worthy of such a man; she has received a most excellent moral education under the eyes of her mother, and is what the world in general calls a very handsome accomplished girl. What say you, Duke? there is not a family in the world I wish so much to be related to. I know you wont endeavour to bias your son's choice in so important an affair; but if he is at liberty, and can meet my proposals, tell him he shall see Seraphine, and judge for himself; her fortune

tune

tune will be very large, and I will do every thing he can wish."

The Duke de St. Piene hardly knew how to put a damp upon the Prince's hopes, whose honest frankness added weight to every word he uttered. He thanked him for the honour he did both him and his son in thus seeking their alliance; but with equal sincerity, mentioned his present prospects and engagements.

"Since he has disposed of his heart," said the Prince, smiling, "there is no more to be said; I only wish my Seraphine had fallen in his way instead of the lively canones; I should long since have mentioned my wishes to him had I known Mademoiselle Moncove designed to take the veil. However, since I must reluctantly relinquish all hopes of being related to you, my friend, why I really think I shall bestow my Seraphine upon my reformed nephew; therefore, at all events,

son will be in a great measure accessory to her happiness."

The Duke assured him Adolphus always spoke in very high terms of the chevalier, who was the very cadet that had accompanied him to the Ducasse, where he first met his father. And in the evening his Grace repeated almost verbatim to his son what had passed between him and the Prince; adding, "it would have been very indelicate, you know, my dear Adolphus, to have held out a hope to his Highness, that if any unexpected event broke off your match with Ermance, you would turn your thoughts upon his daughter, by way of a *pis allen*. Yet I have every reason to believe, he will not dispose of Seraphine till your destiny is irrevocably fixed."

Adolphus said, "in that case, the Prince would pay him a much higher compliment than he deserved; he should however, take an early opportunity of thanking him for the honour he did him; but were any thing to

intervene, either to postpone or break off his marriage with Ermance, he should not feel himself inclined to entertained any other engagements, at least for a time. The truth was, as he foresaw no obstacles himself, he did not like his father's suggestions of the bare probability of such an event.

Five days after Madame de Neufpont and the Count had left Paris, Ernestine, Clemence, and Madames de Franval and des Ormes arrived at l'hotel de St. Firmin, whither they drove in obedience to the orders received. They had not brought any servants with them ; a postillion rode courier from post to post, and they were, as may be supposed, very anxious to learn the reason of their sudden, nay almost secret, removal from Dunkirk.

The Duke, having had notice of the day on which they expected to reach Paris, was waiting their arrival at his son's, as plain as Mr. de Melac ; and after the first welcome
was

was over, and they had taken some refreshment, willing to relieve them from their present state of suspense, he briefly recapitulated the past and late events of his life ; then expatiated on the happiness that awaited them under the protection of the amiable Duchess de St. Piene, whose numerous virtues and exemplary conduct, he descanted upon in the warmest manner ; then deliberately hinted, that proper means had been already taken to legitimate * their claim to his family name ; and that they would henceforward be considered by the Duchess, and the world in general, as the Mademoiselles de St. Piene, and her daughters.

The amiable girls had been very much affected during their father's recital ; and his kind hints removed every painful sensation this unexpected discovery might have given them ; and enabled them very fin-

* Formerly in France natural children might, upon paying a sum of money to government, be legitimate.

cerely

cerely to participate in their beloved parents' joy.

The Duchefs and Adolphus, who thought they had allowed the Duke fufficient time to prepare his daughters to receive them, knocked at the door, and upon being admitted by the Duke, without waiting for the formality of an introduction, the Duchefs took Ernestine and Clemence by turns to her arms; and expreffed her even maternal regard for them in fo kind yet unaffected a manner, they felt as if they had alfo been reflored to the kindeft of mothers. Adolphus followed the Duchefs's example, and welcomed his fifters to Paris in the moft affectionate terms; affured them them he had long felt thofe sentiments in their favour, his confanguinity would now make him proud of displaying. Madame de Franval and the good Madame des Ormes were not forgot amidft the general joy, and both fincerely participated in the affecting fcene.

Ernestine

Ernestine, being rather recovered, recollected she had some letters for her father, among the rest one from Bazile.

“I long to see what he writes,” said the Duke, selecting his epistle from among several others, but before he broke the seal, he gave his daughters a short account of his expedition to Paris, and what had been the result of this excellent frolic. They laughed excessively at their father’s description of his travelling equipage when he first overtook him, and at his departure; declaring they had met Berenger and, they presumed, the other friend in a fish cart, between Breteuil and Amiens.

“This letter, (having looked at the date) must have been wrote,” the Duke observed, “the moment that silly youth left Havre.”

He then read it aloud for the good of the company. He began by expressing his sorrow at not having yet heard from his father,
in

In answer, to two letters he had dispatched ; and which, he now began to think, had miscarried ; therefore entered into a few details concerning his reception, &c. &c.

“ With so weak a head, and so little judgment, Bazile,” said the Duke, smiling, “ you ought not to play the Machiavel.”

The Ducheſs undertook his defence ; and his ſiſters thought Berenger had of late drawn him into many follies ; but hoped, when he learned the extraordinary changes that had taken place in their father’s proſpects, he would at leaſt keep out of low company.

The Duke, unwilling to interrupt the felicity of the preſent moment, affected to acquieſce in their expectations. It was agreed Madame de Franval ſhould continue to ſuperintend the young lady’s improvements ; and next day Madame des Ormes was put in poſſeſſion of her new habitation, with a handſome yearly income to enable her to do the honours

honours of it as became the grandmother of the Mademoiselle de St. Piene.

Vanval was apprized of the young ladies' arrival, and hastened to pay them his compliments. Having finished all his business in Paris, he set out upon his return home the next day, amply compensated for all the trouble he had taken in Bazile's affairs ; and having received proper instructions how to act when the youth arrived at Dunkirk, Mr. Annelly was to assist him in the plan the Duke had laid to punish the young gentleman, and was to give his Grace instant notice of his arrival.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

ON the tenth day from that of her departure, Madame de Neufpont returned to Paris with her daughter and the Comte, and hardly allowed herself time to present Ermance to the Marquis, before she wrote a note to the Duchess, to entreat she would, *sans ceremonie*, bring her husband, son, and daughters to sup with them that evening, forms the Marchioness never paid any attention to ; the monotonous rules prescribed by etiquette, she thought it sufficiently tiresome to be its slave while at Versailles, therefore always laid it aside at Paris.

Her

Her note was delivered to the Duchesse during dinner, at which Adolphus was present; indeed he spent most of his time at his father's hotel. She read it alone, and his animated countenance and sparkling eyes induced Clemence, who was now upon the most intimate footing with her brother, to ask him whether he had not better carry the answer in person.

"I mean to convince you, my dear Clemence," said Adolphus, "my discretion at least equals yours. The Marchioness and her daughter may wish to dedicate a few hours to repose after their journey, before they receive visitors; and I am not vain enough even to wish any exceptions may be made in my favour upon such an occasion."

"Nay, since you are such a stoic, brother, I begin to think I am more impatient to see the lovely Ermance, than you are. No, no; I retreat—your countenance convinces me of my error."

Ernestine

Ernestine joined in her sister's raillery, and as the Duchess knew how impatient her son was to be introduced in form to Ermance, and how angry Madame de Neufpont would be if she thought a ceremonious regard to the proper visiting hour, detained her one moment ; she soon gave orders for the carriage, and set out with all her family for the hotel de Neufpont.

The various opinions the Duke and his daughters had formed of Ermance at Ypres, served them for conversation during their drive.

Adolphus felt his heart beat high as the moment of introduction approached, and very readily, at the Duke's desire, preceded the whole party up stairs, at the head of which he was met by Madame de Neufpont, who seemed in as high spirits as himself ; she caught his hand, calling out, in an accent of surprise, " What, alone !" but instantly had a glimpse of the Duke and Duchess, Ernestine

tine and Clemence, who Adolphus said, had sent him forward to announce their arrival.

“Then here you shall wait to lead them in,” said the Marchioness, “I will punish you for your impoliteness, young gentleman—welcoming the Duke and Duchess, and addressing some very flattering speeches to the young ladies. At her request they walked into the saloon, and she followed, leaving Adolphus. Ermance was standing at upper end of the room to receive her destined husband. The Marquis advanced to meet the Duke and Duchess and the Count de Selicourt, who had chose to be present at the introduction, notwithstanding several hints he had received from Madame de Neufpont, to withdraw towards one of the windows; still curiosity induced him to keep his eyes fixed upon Ermance, whose colour varied several times, and whose embarrassment was very visible: but, in return to a most elegant, nay expressive bow Adolphus made her, for every tender sentiment he had repressed

repressed at Ypres was now visible in his countenance, she, without deigning to raise her eyes, made him a sort of distant cursey; and could she have done it with any degree of propriety, would instantly have resumed her seat; nor did she make the slightest answer to his polite welcome, except a more distant curtsy, rather implying, as well as her countenance, a sort of contempt for the speaker. Astonishment seemed for a while to suspend the faculties of the petrified Adolphus, and he remained motionless, with his eyes fixed upon Ermance;—the young lady, as if offended at his involuntary rudeness, hastily withdrew from his piercing gaze by walking towards another chair.

Adolphus, utterly at a loss to account for such strange behaviour, looked at the Marchioness for an explanation; who, with a forced smile and a shrug of the shoulders, affected to attribute it, as strongly as she could convey her meaning without speaking, to female caprice; and though she felt she
felt

could with pleasure have boxed her daughter's ears, still she could only suppose she was afraid of appearing too forward. The Duke and Duchess looked at each other, when they could take their eyes off their beloved Adolphus; and Clemence's gaiety all forsook her, the moment she perceived her favourite brother disconcerted. Upon looking round him, Adolphus remarked upon the countenance of his father, mother, and sisters an expression of commiseration he was severely hurt to think he had excited; the blood, which had all forsook his cheeks, returned with redoubled violence, and with a precipitancy he vainly hoped would appear the effect of unconcern, he turned towards the Marquis, with whom he began to discourse upon indifferent subjects; while Madame de Neufpont introduced the Duke, Duchess, and Mademoiselle de St. Piene to Ermance.

During this ceremony Adolphus rather recovered himself; but what mortified him
more

more than any thing, was the looks of the Count de Selicourt, who, though he evidently tried to conceal his satisfaction, seemed inwardly to enjoy Adolphus's mortification. The Marchioness exerted all her gaiety to remove the general embarrassment, but her spirits were too much forced to have the desired effect. She placed Adolphus, however, next her daughter, and in a short time the rest of the company got seated, and the conversation became general; till Adolphus, unwilling to discover how seriously he was piqued, addressed a few questions to Ermance respecting Madame de l'Ecluse's health, her journey, &c.; to all which he received the most frigid and laconic answers. He could no longer attribute her behaviour to caprice, as every look, action, and word expressed, in his opinion, an absolute aversion. "How strangely I must have deceived myself, (thought he) what abominable vanity I have displayed! Ermance liked me when I appeared in the character of her brother-in-law, and detests me now I have assumed

that of her lover! she has certainly seen some more fortunate man, and looks upon me, perhaps, as her greatest enemy." Pride, that useful assistant upon many occasions, made him fancy he now pitied her more than he had ever loved her; at all events, he longed for an opportunity to set her mind at ease respecting his future intentions.

Madame de Neufpont tried to divert the attention of the rest of the company, in hopes the embarrassment of the supposed lovers would wear off the sooner for not being noticed. She therefore addressed Clemence, whom she had often heard Adolphus mention with true brotherly affection, as being the counterpart of his beloved Ermance, hoped her daughter and she would soon be great friends; but Ermance was rather out of spirits, owing to her having so lately left some very near and dear friends, and to the fatigue of her journey.

Clemence

Clemence was too much hurt by the behaviour of Ermance to pay much regard to Madame de Neufpont's excuses for her gravity and reserve, as they seemed very incompatible with the sentiments she was supposed to have in favour of the Duke de Civrac; she therefore made a slight complimentary reply in answer to the wishes the Marchioness expressed, but in fact did not feel at all inclined to cultivate the acquaintance of so capricious a young lady.

A sort of universal silence, the result of the general astonishment, now prevailed. The Duchess, who sat contemplating her son, no longer able to bear her present state of suspense, made the Marchioness a sign she understood, and they withdrew together.

The moment they were alone, "For heaven's sake, my dear friend," said the Duchess, "what does all this mean? and why did you send for my son?"

“ Not to afford Ermance an opportunity of displaying these capricious airs, believe me, my dear Minette ; no one could seem more rejoiced than she appeared to be, when I first mentioned the alteration that had taken place in her matrimonial prospects ; and as far as I am a judge of the human heart, she appeared to be very much in love with your son ; but I must acknowledge she has been remarkable pensive and reserved for these last three days, which I, in a great measure, attributed to her regard for Palmira, whose determination to take the veil she often deplored. However, I will soon fathom this seeming mystery ; she shall not play the fool with impunity ; such ridiculous reserve, after the acknowledgments she made in your son’s favour, is too absurd to be borne. I will call her out as soon as we return, and question her very seriously upon the subject.” The Duchefs approved of the motion ; and after a little more conversation, they returned to the saloon.

During

During their absence, Adolphus, roused by his own reflections, became sensible of what he owed himself ; and as this was not a very propitious moment to remove the dread Ermance seemed to entertain of being forced into his arms ; he determined, at all events, to convince her he could treat her with an equal, if not a superior, degree of indifference. He therefore arose from his seat, and approached the Count de Selicourt, to whom he had merely paid his compliments in a general way when he entered. He had particularly observed how much the elegant fop seemed to enjoy his mortification ; he was particularly anxious to convince him how little he was, or had been hurt, by the behaviour of Ermance ; he therefore questioned the Count about Flanders and Artois ; and asked him if he had taken a trip to Dunkirk during his stay at Bourbourg ?

Under the most affected *nonchalance* and apparent frankness, few men concealed more art and duplicity than the Count de Selicourt,

court, nor studied more successfully the foibles of their relations and friends ; he was, in many respects, an absolute Proteus. Thoroughly acquainted with the character of the Duke de Civrac, who was superior to either art or dissimulation, he knew he must at least affect to deal openly with him, if he did not wish to make him his enemy ; therefore, with a look conveying far more meaning than his words, he said, in return to the Duke's last question, " Madame de Neufpont's stay was too uncertain to permit me to leave Bourbourg, your Grace ; but during my rambles in its environs, I met the Chevalier de Rosanne, who entrusted me with a message to your Grace, meant for your private ear, or I should not have deferred one moment executing his commission."

Excessively happy, the (in his opinion) silly fop thus gave him a pretence for leaving the room ; and might, by the same means afford him an excuse for leaving the hotel de Neufpont. Adolphus said, with the

the Marquis's permission they would step for a few minutes into the next room ;—of course no objection was made to the young Duke's proposal ; the Count and he left the room by one door, as the Duchefs and Madame de Neufpont returned by the other. As the Duke suspected the Count had requested this audience merely to relate some amour he had been engaged in during his stay in Flanders, he did not express a curiosity he was far from feeling, but suffered him to begin the conversation without paving the way for his story by one single question. The Count knew he had to deal with a man, though so much younger than himself, renowned for his judgment and penetration ; to deceive the Duke into a belief that he was acting with the utmost candour and frankness, required all his art ; with affected hesitation he therefore thus began.

“ Upon my word, your Grace, I have only the best of motives to plead in excuse for

thus intruding upon your time; I did not see the Chevalier de Rosanne." The Duke grew more attentive, and fixed his expressive eyes upon the Count, who repeated his words; adding, "I merely made use of his name to obtain a private audience of your Grace; as the strange behaviour of Madame de Moncove makes it necessary I should exculpate myself in your Grace's eyes; for having, very innocently, been in some measure the occasion of her present reserve."

This preamble strongly excited the curiosity of Adolphus, who, finding the Count paused, as if to allow him time to digest what he had already said, and in a tone of impatience exclaimed, "Upon my word I am at a loss to guess your meaning, Count? pray explain yourself."

"Your Grace, I hope, attributes my hesitation to the real cause; for I am particularly distressed when I reflect my communications must necessarily damp those hopes, I understood from Madame de Neufpont

you

you had formed, of having made yourself an interest in the heart of her youngest daughter; though indeed I hardly believed the silly girl was in earnest at Bourbourg, for I never was more puzzled in my life; what she can see with me I can't conceive, glancing his eyes towards a pier glass while he was speaking.

"I presume you mean to inform me, Count, that Madame de Moncove thinks you more likely to contribute to her happiness in the conjugal state than myself. Pray spare yourself those circumlocutions"

"The determination of Mademoiselle de Moncove to take the veil induced Madame de Neufpont to wish to become related to my mother through the means of her youngest daughter, the absolute enemy of disguise and affectation; I listened to the proposal with pleasure, because the young lady had made a very favourable impression upon my mind, and vanity, I presume, for I don't know to what other cause to attribute my mistake, led me to imagine I was not

absolutely indifferent to the young canones; her behaviour has convinced me of my mistake, and before I left the saloon I had determined to relinquish the pleasure I should have felt in becoming related to Mons. and Madame de Neufpont."

"Neither Madame de Moncove nor you, Count, are at all accountable to me for your mutual sentiments, or her behaviour."

"There I differ from your Grace. Besides, believe me our sentiments are not reciprocal; but I believe the demon of caprice has seized both the Marquis de Neufpont's daughters; I think they had better be nuns at once. But it seems Ermance is absolutely miserable at the thoughts of being united to your Grace, merely because the measure meets the approbation of her father and mother, in my opinion; yet says she has not courage enough to make the acknowledgment to the Marchioness, so I presume has determined to induce your Grace to leave her full leisure to repent her folly: and by way of interesting *me* in her behalf, I suppose, she

she chose, during my stay at Bourbourg, to make me such pointed advances I could not help noticing ; and, notwithstanding my unfeigned indifference, she has not merely given me to understand by oblique hints, but fairly told me she prefers me to your Grace—woman like, actuated by the mere spirit of contradiction ; for if she draws comparison between us, I think they can't terminate very much in my favour. And as I positively am in no sort of hurry to part with my liberty, nor at all inclined to avail myself of her condescension, I think she must either make a third choice, or follow her sister's example. However, I should have thought myself highly culpable, the moment I found she was determined to persevere in the foolish plan she has adopted, in not mentioning what had passed between us to your Grace ; and most probably my recital has induced you to despise her as thoroughly as I do."

The Duke had listened to the Count with some surprise, and still more emotion, which

he had vainly endeavoured to conceal from the observation of the artful Selicourt, and soon began seriously to think this fashionable rake had turned the head of Ermance; he therefore instantly determined to banish her seducing image for ever from his heart, and to feign from that moment an indifference towards her he was far from feeling: but wounded vanity often makes the human mind capable of the greatest exertions; he therefore, with an air of unconcern that staggered the astonished Selicourt, thanked him for this candid explanation of Ermance's behaviour; adding, with a smile, "I trust you won't long remain inexorable, Count; independent of Madame de Moncove's beauty and accomplishments, such a match can't fail of being every way advantageous; and as you must marry sooner or later, why not bestow your name upon a lady who has given you such proofs of her discernment."

Selicourt felt the irony, but did not venture to retort, more than "as I have not yet
come

come to any absolute determination, your Grace, and rather wish to avoid the noose than run my neck into it, I shall still feign, as far as lays in my power, ignorance of the silly girl's sentiments: should the Marquis or Marchioness appeal to my feelings upon the occasion, why I must submit to wear shackles with the best grace I can assume. But as I am by no means desirous of accelerating so little desirable an event, may I entreat your Grace would not take any notice to either Monsf. or Madame de Neufpont of my communications, and place them to the wish I have ever felt to serve your Grace."

"You have done me an essential service, sir," said Adolphus, "by relieving me at once from a most disagreeable state of suspense, and sparing me a thousand useless conjectures; and I have no doubt but you were actuated by the purest motives, therefore, with your leave, we will return to the company."

CHAP. VII.

ERMANCE and her mother had left the room during their absence, the Duke and Marquis were talking in a low voice at a distance from the ladies, and Ernestine and Clemence were expressing their surprise at Madame de Moncove's behaviour to the Duchefs.

The return of Adolphus and the Count made the conversation once more rather general. The Duke tried to read his son's sentiments in his intelligent countenance, and was happy to observe he seemed to feel what was due to himself upon so trying an occasion. The Marquis had neither been
able

able to account for, nor give any solution to his daughter's strange behaviour: that she was averse to the intended match, had struck him as forcibly as it had the Duke, he was therefore equally astonished her mother had not made the same discovery, and had thus permitted her to display her caprice before her best friends, and almost at the expence of their son's pain, hardly knew what to say; the Duke, with a gaiety very foreign to his feelings, asked Adolphus if the Chevalier de Rosanne stood in no further need of his kind uncle's indulgence?

“No indeed, my dear sir; I trust every prognostic I made in his favour is now fully verified.”

The Count was beginning to make some remarks upon the Chevalier, when a summons came from Madame de Neufpont to intreat the Dukes and Adolphus would favour her with their company in the dressing-room.

The .

The Duke and Marquis looked surprised, but said nothing; and the sisters communicated their astonishment to each other in a whisper, while the Count de Selicourt, to conceal his triumph, which was not free from some very disagreeable reflections, undertook to arrange the fire;—eager to fathom this, to her, inexplicable mystery, the Duchess took her son's arm and left the room.

They found Madame de Neufpont drowned in tears. The Count's communications had in some measure prepared Adolphus for this sight, knowing how much the Marchioness's heart was set upon being related to his mother. His mother and him had each taken a hand of their afflicted friend, while Madame de St. Piene anxiously intreated to know what had thus disturbed her. The Marchioness threw her arms round the Duchess's neck, and in a stifled accent exclaimed, "My heart is almost broken!"

"God forbid!" said the Duchess, pressing her to her bosom; "at all events, let the friend, in whose past afflictions you so sincerely

cerely participated, endeavour, in her turn, to alleviate your misfortunes; what has thus affected you? I won't try to guess, because I am certain you don't wish to keep either my son or me in suspense."

"Far from it, my best Minette."—The Marchioness, unable to proceed till a second flood of tears relieved her oppressed heart, thus continued:—"I don't possess your fortitude; mine has been put to too severe a trial after the hopes I had entertained; to have every wish of my heart frustrated at the moment I was anticipating their completion, is more than I can bear."

"I perfectly understand you, my dear Marchioness," said Adolphus; therefore don't hesitate to confirm the suspicions Madame de Moncove's behaviour has already led me to form: I was totally mistaken in my former conjectures; the blame ought to fall upon me for having led you into an error; though I may plead in extenuation that I was equally deceived myself."

"Generous

“Generous, amiable Adolphus, is it thus you think to console me ! but had any body, except Ermance herself, accounted as she has done for her behaviour towards you, I should not have thought them entitled to any degree of credit ; for, upon my questioning her, she told me death, in any shape, would be preferable to an union with the Duke de Civrac, and with a boldness unexampled at her age ; on my enquiring into her reasons, detesting, as you well know Minette, all romantic and unnatural expressions, (which are convincing proofs, in my opinion, that something is wrong either in the head or the heart), she acknowledged a violent passion for the Count de Selicourt ; and declared she was bent upon following her sister’s example, if she was not allowed to marry the man of her choice.”

Madame de St. Piene stood motionless with astonishment ; but Adolphus, with the utmost composure, endeavoured to soothe her. “ Now, what has your favourite Ermance

mance done or said, Marchioness, to afflict you thus? are not you blaming what you certainly ought to applaud?—situated as she was, dissimulation would have been, in my opinion a crime: she inherits all her amiable mother's frankness, and has too little art to conceal her feelings. You must allow me to plead her cause, though a very improper person to do justice to her motives; I am no stoic, therefore must confess her reception hurt me excessively, though it fully prepared me for the acknowledgements she has so recently made. I am not the only one by many thousands, whom love has blinded in a similar way, and led into a similar error. I deserve to be laughed at for my presumption, since Madame de Moncove has bestowed her heart upon the Count; I can't wonder at the strength of the expressions she made use of to indicate her dislike for me: while she supposes my pretensions may prevent him from acknowledging his, she must hate me; but they ceased from the moment I discovered my vanity had misled, respecting

ing her sentiments ; therefore send for her, dearest madam, and relieve her anxious mind from the dreadful apprehensions of being forced into the arms of a man she must abhor, and she will be all and every thing you can wish in a daughter. I don't pretend to prescribe with respect to the Count de Selicourt, he certainly possesses many amiable qualities ; his follies are authorised by the fashion : and such a union may, nay, doubtless will, have the happiest effect upon his disposition. Only reflect what misery you might entail upon Ermance were you, by opposing her wishes in a point which so nearly concerns her happiness, and drive her into a cloister. But excuse me, my amiable friend, for permitting the interest I take in her future welfare thus to get the better of my discretion."

He rose as he concluded. Madame de St. Piene, her eyes glittering with delight, presented him her hand in silence, which he raised to his lips, without speaking, and left
the

the room. While crossing the suite of apartments which led into the saloon, he reflected he could enter into no explanations to his father before the Count and his sisters; besides, it would be much better to allow Madame de Neufpont, or his mother, to undertake that task. Piqued with the Count, and dissatisfied with having suffered himself to be thus egregiously deceived respecting Ermance's sentiments, and not feeling inclined to return to the company, he went down stairs, and, as it was a very fine evening, and he had no carriage in waiting, walked home, without once reflecting he ought to have left a message of some sort for the Marquis and Marchioness, or have told his mother of his intentions. He went into his dressing-room as soon as he reached his own hotel, and began to revolve in his mind the occurrences of the evening: doubt and amazement were still his predominant sensations. Lost in various reflections, and unable to define his own feelings, he was interrupted by the entrance of his father, as well

as well as the Marquis, who had been sent for by the Duchefs as soon as Adolphus left them ; and their mutual surprise, when they had learned why they had been summoned, made them not notice his absence.

The Marquis was excessively hurt and very much displeased with Ermance for having suffered Adolphus to be sent for merely to insult him ; for her behaviour must have struck the Duke de Civrac in the same light it did him. “ But where is his Grace ? ” he continued ; “ let me at least endeavour to exculpate myself in his eyes for having, though very innocently, put it in the power of a daughter of mine to treat him in so shameful a manner.”

The Duchefs assured the Marquis no one was to blame ; that Ermance’s behaviour was occasioned by her inexperience, and, upon the whole, very laudible ; adding, Adolphus was of that way of thinking.

“ Have

"Have not you seen him since he left us," said she.

"He did not return into the saloon," said the Duke de St. Piene, who, perfectly acquainted with the progress of his son's passion for Ermance, now began to be seriously uneasy, and left the dressing-room with the Marquis in search of him, and soon found he had left the hotel; therefore taking a polite leave of the Marquis, who insisted on keeping his wife and daughters to supper, he promised to fetch them home, and proceeded with the utmost expedition towards the Rue de Richelieu, presuming Adolphus had bent his course homewards, and felt a very great pressure removed from his heart when the farmer's porter confirmed his suspicions. He went immediately into his dressing-room, and his appearance recalled to his son's recollection his abrupt exit from the hotel de Neufpont. The Duke would not listen to any apologies, but taking a chair near him, began immediately upon the subject nearest both their hearts; expressed his

6

surprise

surprise at the conduct of Ermance, particularly her strong declaration in favour of the Count de Selicourt.

“I can only suppose,” said Adolphus, “the Count’s indifference towards her piqued her vanity, repeating what had passed between him and that gentleman.

“And I attribute his communications to vanity much more than to friendship, my Adolphus, and am perfectly convinced you are of my opinion; for I am often tempted, notwithstanding the difference in our age, to appeal to your superior judgment. Unfortunately Palmira has set her sister a sort of romantic example, she seems determined to follow. While she looked upon you as her sister’s intended husband, she fancied she loved you; but the moment the first wish of her heart became that of her father and mother, all romance ceased, and she did not like to follow even the dictates of her own heart when they coincided with the wishes of her parents:—the moment her marriage with you
assumed

assumed the appearance of a family arrangement, she ceased to desire it. The retired life she has ever led inflamed her imagination, and she longed to become the heroine of a tragic story, therefore can't condescend to be happy in the common way. If I am mistaken in my present conjectures, I shall be tempted to form a very bad opinion of the Count de Selicourt; and though I acknowledge I put the utmost faith in his indifference, I shall be tempted to fancy he has taken some unfair means to obtain the heart of Ermance. To many young men, situated as you are Adolphus, I should not dare to be thus explicit, but am too well acquainted with your principles to hesitate about giving you my opinion of the Count, who is every way unworthy your notice, and a woman who could balance one moment between the Count de Selicourt and you; and still more unworthy of your love."

No argument was more likely to banish the fascinating Ermance from his son's mind.

Adolphus felt the strength of his father's reasoning, and assured him he was very happy Ermance had not been able to conceal her dislike for him ; and that he should think it absolutely madness to quarrel with the Count, who had, at all events, done him a very great service ; because if Ermance, admitting she ever had loved him, could so soon transfer her affections to the Count, she must be utterly incapable of contributing to the happiness of any sensible man.

The Duke and he reasoned a good deal more upon the subject, till his father, thinking his own reflections would be of more avail on reconciling his mind to this, in every respect, severe disappointment, with proper fortitude, took leave of him for the night, having made him promise to breakfast with him the next morning, and set out for the hotel de Neufpont. From the Marquis's, still excessively displeased with his daughter, the Count had taken his leave before supper ; and Mons. de Neufpont's family

mily believed, like Adolphus, his indifference had inflamed the pride of Ermance, and induced her to try to captivate the elegant fop.

The Duchefs and her daughters were happy when they faw the Duke, as they were by no means forry to leave Monf. and Madame de Neufpont to canvafs their future conduct *tete-a-tete*.

Ermance remained in her own apartment; nor had her mother felt at all inclined to extend the olive branch in her favour, notwithstanding the kind arguments Adolphus had made ufe of to reconcile her to her behaviour. Both the Marquis and fhe ardently wifhed to enquire how he had bore his difappointment; but it was too delicate a queftion to put to a father, jealous as they knew the Duke de St. Piene was, of his fon's honour. The Duchefs, though the moft anxious, repressed her curiofity till they were on their way home. When fhe bade the

Marchioness adieu, she, with tears in her eyes, entreated to see her the next day, and the Duchess, with more than usual kindness, promised to comply with her desires ; whilst the Marquis, in a tone sufficiently expressive of his serious displeasure towards his daughter, said, “ I am of opinion, Duke, I can’t punish my wavering daughter more severely than by suffering her to dispose of her hand in favour of the Count, provided he is condescending enough to close with my offer.”

“ Depend upon it, Marquis, he will think himself honoured by the alliance ; and my son will be very much pleased with your determination ; because, if we are to put any faith in a lady’s declarations in love affairs, your consent will be very conducive to Madame de Moncove’s happiness.”

The Duke, Duchess, Ernestine, and Clemence took their leave, and the Duke assured them Adolphus bore his disappointment like
a hero

a hero. They then descanted very freely upon the conduct of Ermance, and agreed it was highly exceptionable, and could only attribute her behaviour to a wish to mortify Adolphus; and this desire the Duke strongly suspected, and not without great reason, from the suggestions of the Count

CHAP. VIII.

THE Count de Selicourt was Madame de Neufpont's travelling companion; a vague wish to see Ermance had induced him to offer to become her escort upon the occasion, as he understood she was to bear the name of de Civrac instead of Palmira. This mere family arrangement would not have excited his curiosity to see the destined bride, if Madame de Neufpont had not told him where and when she and the Duke had met met, and what had been the consequence of their seeing each other. This convinced him Ermance must be very handsome since she had made such an impression upon the Duke

Duke de Civrac, who was almost the idol of every fashionable woman. He therefore, upon mature reflection, thought it would be an exploit worthy of himself could he rival this (he was forced to acknowledge) all-accomplished man in the affections of the innocent Ermance. He had long very cordially disliked his Grace, merely because he was universally respected and esteemed; and he was particularly hurt with the praises that accompanied his name whenever it was mentioned; to mortify this celebrated hero, even in imagination, afforded him the greatest delight. That Ermance should have been struck with his fine figure, elegant manners, and fascinating discourse, no ways astonished him; for, much against his will, he was forced to be just, and to admit, no man was half so likely to captivate an artless, amiable girl, just emerged from the solitude of a convent; such a character must render execrable the most romantic passion in his favour; he therefore built his strongest foundation upon the Duke's honour, which he knew had pre-

vented him from making love to one sister while he was under engagements to the other. Ermance, by her sister's strange determination, was become one of the first heiresses in France; she was, therefore, a prize he fully resolved not to let slip through his fingers; such an attempt was truly worthy of his transcendant talents.

When Madame de Neufpont and himself reached Bourbourg, they found the Abbess really very ill; and the Marchioness instantly determined, notwithstanding her impatience to return to Paris, not to leave her sister while she thought her in any danger, and imparted her resolution to the Count, who assured her he was perfectly at her service.

It may not, perhaps, be a general, though it is certainly in many respects a very just observation, that there is not a more dangerous companion for a young inexperienced girl, than a man who has designs upon her
fortune

fortune without caring for her person; self-gratification being his only aim, he is able to dive into every secret recess of her heart, and to discover every weakness of her disposition; and his own indifference enables him to form his plans infinitely better than the most ardent lover; her predominant passion seems transfused into his mind; he accommodates himself to her most unreasonable caprices, undermines every tie of duty, if it clashes with his separate interests, and conceals his deep and dark designs under the veil of *love*, a word so fascinating in the vocabulary of youth.

Selicourt was an old rake, though not an old man; and entertained the most contemptible idea of the sex in general. His appearance, when he chose to lay aside the affected airs of a *petit maitre*, was very much in his favour; elegant in his person and dress. He spared no pains to appear to advantage on the day he reached Bourbourg; and when introduced to the lovely undesign-

ing Ermance, tried by every expression likely to flatter her vanity, to convince her he was absolutely *dazzled by the blaze of beauty breaking forth on his astonished senses*. Madame de Neufpont gave him full opportunity to exert his eloquence, as she left her daughter to entertain him, while she paid her sister a visit.

The Count dared not venture too far at first; far fetched compliments merely excited the mirth of Ermance, who was in unusual spirits, and not yet acquainted with her projected marriage; she knew her mother was come in search of her, and longed more ardently than ever to quit her retirement. The Count changed his plan of attack, and with a gaiety similar to her own, turned the discourse upon convents and chapter-houses; agreed on every thing she said; seemed delighted with several little traits she recited; and addressed to her wit what she would not allow him to pay to her beauty.

When

When they retired for the evening, Madame de Neufpont entered upon the purport of her journey; congratulated Ermance upon the conquest she had made, and on her approaching nuptials, with a kindness truly mutual.

Ermance was too artless to conceal either her joy or surprise. She had learnt with extreme wonder, and great sorrow, her sister's strange determination, but felt she could hardly regret a step productive of such unexpected felicity to herself. She spent a sleepless night, reflecting with delight upon her happy prospects; and anticipating, with the eagerness of her age, the first meeting between her and Adolphus; wondered he had not accompanied her mother instead of the Count; and foresaw such an alliance would make her the happiest of mortals.

After breakfast she was again left alone with the designing Count; his eyes were
G 6 frequently

frequently fixed upon her animated countenance, and as instantaneously withdrawn the moment she perceived this sort of involuntary homage he paid her charms ; frequent sighs, and affected absence of mind, led Ermance to suppose something preyed upon the mind of her elegant cousin. Madame de Neufpont saw no more danger in leaving Ermance to amuse the Count, than her sister had done when she put her under the Duke de Civrac's care at Ypres.

During this interview, the Count merely tried, with all the success he could desire, to excite her curiosity ; vanity he trusted would whisper the secret he meant her to understand ; and before evening she began to suspect the Count had formed an unfortunate attachment, and that she was the occasion of his frequent sighs and reveries ; the idea was flattering. Her mind then reverted to Ypres, and Adolphus presented himself to her imagination, kissing his hand to her as she stood at the window ; the reflection
banished

banished the Count from her thoughts. Yet, if the Duke de Civrac had been so much struck with her, why not have disclosed his passion to her? would he have fulfilled his engagements to her sister if she had not taken the veil? or did Palmira take that step because his Grace had declared his sentiments in her favour. This was a matter she wished very much to have cleared up, yet knew not whom to question; but determined, rather than fail, to apply to Palmira herself.

During the course of the following day, Selicourt, with an air of the deepest dejection, very ill adapted to his discourse, began to congratulate her upon her approaching nuptials; adding, "every one must envy the fortunate Duke de Civrac, but I am bound almost to execrate him"—glancing his eyes at Ermance with an expression of the most enraptured love.

"You amaze me, cousin," said the blushing Ermance; "I am really at a loss to comprehend your meaning."

"Excuse

“Excuse my vehemence, *belle cousine*; there are moments when I have not the command I ought to have over my feelings; the energy of my mind communicates itself to my discourse; and, unaccustomed to disguise, I have laid myself open, I fear, to your censure. Would to heaven I had never come to Bourbourg!” taking a turn in the room while he spoke, and then throwing himself into a chair, as if overcome by reflections which did not allow him to remember that he was alone.

Ermance, astonished at his behaviour, entreated in the gentlest accents, to know what distressed him.

“Your kindness, my lovely, my amiable cousin,” said the artful Selicourt, rising and seizing her hand, which he carried with rapidity to his lips, and as instantly let fall; then drawing her gently towards a large glass—“survey that beauteous form, dearest Ermance, and then judge, after being allowed

lowed to hope I should one day call you mine, what my feelings are now I am forced to treat you as the destined bride of the Duke de Civrac ; but for your sister's fatal situation, I should have the supreme advantage of devoting my future life to your happiness ; but madam de Neufpont is so bigotted to the idea of being related to her friend, she does not make the slightest scruple of sacrificing her children's happiness to so ridiculous a chimera, formed too before she knew whether she ever should have any, or what their dispositions might be ; and she persists in persevering in her plan, notwithstanding the recent proofs she has had of its folly, which is to me not only the source of my present misery, but absolutely incomprehensible."

Ermance, disengaging herself from his grasp, said, " I positively don't understand either what you mean or say, Count ; and, at all events, I have no reason to blame my mother's precipitation in disposing of her children."

" May

“ May you always be of this opinion, my charming cousin ; but permit me one question, does the self devoted Palmira know you are doomed to wear the splendid chains she so nobly rejected ? for she is much better acquainted with the *moral* Duke de Civrac’s real character than you can be, my sweet girl, nay than your mother is, or ever will be.”

“ You astonish me, Count ; what do you mean to insinuate ! or what do you wish me to understand ?”

“ What can I say, my lovely cousin, that can possibly strike you half so forcibly as the resolution your sister has formed, to bury herself in a cloister rather than bear the pompous title of Duchess de Civrac.”

Ermance was petrified at this unexpected explanation of her sister’s strange conduct. Fearful of hearing any thing derogatory to the honour of a man she so tenderly loved ; she longed, yet dared not press the Count to speak with less ambiguity ; surely, said she

to

to herself, this Duke must have some strange failings, he has hitherto had art enough to conceal from my mother. In hopes the Count would be more explicit, she said, "I always understood the Duke de Civrac was an honour to his rank and country; but you, Count, who have long lived in the great world, and in habits of intimacy with his Grace, may be a better judge than those I have hitherto heard mention him."

"He is generally supposed to be a very *moral* man, my dear Ermance; and believe me I don't wish to lower him in your opinion. There are *righteous*, and there are *good men*, you know, my lovely cousin, I need not point out the difference. But I am going farther than I intended; I merely wish you to reflect, before the inevitable *yes* is pronounced, upon what may be the consequence of your mother's ridiculous predilection in favour of her friend's son; for she shuts her eyes against his feelings. To reason with her would be as absurd as it would be useless; to your own heart, therefore, I mean to
appeal

appeal, as I have too high an opinion of your discretion to suppose you would repeat the mere dictates of the more than regard you have inspired me with. May this favourite of Madame de Neufpont's appreciate your merits, lovely Ermance; if he does but make you happy, I will become his champion, and loudly assert that the world in general have mistaken his character. You little think, my lovely girl, what sacrifices it is supposed the Duke will exact from his wife. Rigid in his own principles, because wholly devoid of feeling, he makes a scruple of joining in the most innocent diversions; educated by a narrow-minded bigotted mother, and a strict confessor, he lives a hermit in the midst of the great world, and is only respected by those who can't fathom the secret springs of his conduct. Palmira has a judgment superior to her years, and Madame l'Hotellain gave her the real character of the Duke. I need not tell you what was the consequence of her friendly motives; heaven forbid you should form a similar resolution;

I merely

I merely wish you to assert your independence. How far more enviable would have been your fate, my Ermance, had this righteous Duke, this heterogeneous mixture of pride and sanctity, been a perfect rake; then might your charms and virtues have worked a reformation in his conduct; now your innocent gaiety will soon be deemed a crime. Nominal mistress of one of the finest houses in Paris, you will find the hotel de St. Firmin a convent in every sense of the word, from which the young and gay will be forever banished. Madame de St. Piene, (from whose society and conversation heaven preserve those I love!) her immaculate husband, whom pride makes act up to what he calls duty, and your father and mother will be your only visitors. Oh, most lovely of your sex! for your own sake, remember I am not pleading my own cause; exert your spirit, and don't let so much beauty and sweetness be devoted to the frozen Duke de Civrac."

Ermance

Ermance never underwent so many different sensations in so short a time. She wished to refute some of the Count's argument, and was preparing to answer him, when Madame de Neufpont joined them. The perturbation of Ermance's mind was visible upon her countenance. The Count remarked it, and by way of accounting for her apparent agitation to the Marchioness, observed, "we were just talking over the strange resolution of Madame de Moncove and its probable consequence."

This explanation perfectly satisfied Madame de Neufpont, who merely replied, "I find Ermance is not more in her sister's confidence than I am. I think, Count, you shall exert your eloquence upon Palmira; I am convinced you will at least draw a very alluring picture of the great world; and as she can't suppose you actuated by any sinister motive, she may not have the same objections to seeing you she has to admit the Duke de Civrac. But I wish to write a few
lines

lines to Paris ; Ermance can you furnish me with materials ?”

The bewildered girl left the room with her mother for that purpose, and then retired to her own to reflect upon what the Count had asserted. His arguments struck her very forcibly ; the Duke, for a man in love, had certainly treated her with uncommon reserve at Ypres ; always seemed fearful of becoming too familiar—yet, when he was off his guard, how truly amiable ; and as the Count acknowledged himself his rival, it was not to be supposed he would endeavour to prepossess her in the Duke’s favour ; still the resolution of Palmira gave infinite weight to his words, yet it became her to defend his Grace ; besides such a measure might lead the Count to bring some proofs in support of his present vague allegations. She therefore hastened down stairs, and finding the Count still alone, seized the opportunity of renewing the subject.

Satisfied

Satisfied with having raised doubts and scruples in her innocent mind, the Count tried to change the discourse; and in answer to the arguments she made use of in defence of Adolphus, merely answered by a smile, or a compliment upon the excellence of her heart; then, wishing to complete his triumph, “can you suppose, my lovely cousin, the Duke would attempt to dictate to you before marriage;—men of his turn of mind may be compared to Sextus the Fifth, they assume the disguise most likely to forward their schemes, till they have succeeded, and then, like him, glory in their duplicity. your artless simplicity made you no match, nor did not permit you to judge of the Duke de Civrac, my charming cousin; and should you in the present instance appeal to his candour, I should not blame you. I know I have acted imprudently, and perhaps you may not thank me for having endeavoured to open your eyes; the Duke would merely call me out for venturing to speak my thoughts of him; and as I certainly should
not

not chuse to retreat, his or my life might become the forfeit of my sincerity."

Ermance shuddered at this hint, and assured him, though she hoped he was mistaken in many of the conjectures he had formed, she had too much discretion to reveal what he had said, even to her mother; therefore he surely would not object to giving her, not his own, but the universal opinion the world had of the Duke.

The wily Selicourt with difficulty concealed his joy, while he seized the shafts of ridicule, and turned them with such dexterity upon the Duke, as soon completely lowered him in the opinion of Ermance. "His Grace's rank, my lovely cousin, and athletic make, has hitherto secured him from personal insult; but he is now strongly suspected of cowardice, and is so thoroughly despised by all the officers in his regiment, who are not so enamoured with his godly doctrines as your mother, that it is thought
he

he must resign his post in the army. His father's unexpected return, and situation in the ministry, will afford him an excellent opportunity, and he is certainly particularly adapted to hold some sway in the political department. Among men of his own age, he is merely a sort of butt, and is universally disliked by your sex : a semblance of virtue won't impose upon those who judge impartially ; and a severe moralist of four-and-twenty who is scrupulous in reversing all the reigning fashions for fear he should be thought to attend to his dress, must excite general disgust, and the contempt of every sensible person of either sex."

Ermance, once more tried to defend him, protesting his dress at Ypres was very much admired, and particularly fashionable.

" He was acting Sextus the Fifth then, my lovely cousin ; he already, though you were kept in ignorance of her design, knew why he had been rejected by Agnes, and was
prepared

prepared to meet you at the Bishop's, and no doubt tried every means to secure your heart. He had been previously tutored by his mother and yours; and his taylor, no doubt, received orders to set him off to the best advantage upon such an occasion. But believe me, dearest cousin, notwithstanding your sparkling eyes, beaming with intelligence and sensibility, your lovely shape, and all your accomplishments, (fixing his eyes expressively on her face) neither your beauty nor your worth have made any impression upon the callous heart of your intended husband, which, enveloped in a mist he calls duty, is in fact dead to all sentiment. I speak from the first authority, little cousin; for, notwithstanding his boasted love, which your mother, no doubt, trumpets forth with all her zeal, he did not wish to accompany her to Bourbourg; indeed he thought, and very justly, she would be able to plead his cause far better than he could have done himself. Such a proof of his indifference can't fail of striking you, my dear

VOL. III. H cousin,

cousin : had I been in his place, I would have outstript the winds to have poured out my whole heart at your feet."

Ermance, angry, displeased, and staggered, was much too inexperienced to discover the artful Count's designs ; to her the Duke had appeared a demi-god ; how unpleasant then, at such a moment, to destroy so pleasing an illusion ; yet the Count's last remark was unanswerable ; and Selicourt perceiving he had now successfully played upon her credulity, continued to work upon her artless mind, till the Duke, of whom (becoming more bold) he now ventured to recite various traits of his own invention, became almost an object of horror to her wounded mind.

Where was thy guardian angel at this fatal moment, Ermance, thus to leave his charge a prey to so vile a seducer ?

CHAP.

FR
now
huma
wishi
the fo
her, i
might
the w

A t
mance
preten
union

CHAP IX.

FROM one of the happiest, Ermance now became one of the most miserable of human beings ; but the Count, by no means wishing to drive her into a convent, poured the softest love-tales into her ears, and assured her, if she would but be guided by him, she might still be one of the happiest women in the world.

A total stranger to the acts of men, Ermance easily became the dupe of the Count's pretended affection, and began to fancy a union with him would ensure her felicity :

H 2

thus

thus deceived, she suffered him to crown his work by his advice.

She treated the Duke de Civrac as has been already related, and acknowledged to her mother her predilection in the Count's favour; to which she added the *threat* most likely to induce her parents to comply with her wishes. The Count had thus led her on, underpretence that honour forbid him making his pretensions known till she was freed from her present engagements; but the moment the phlegmatic de Civrac was discarded, he would come forward and assert his claims. Every thing succeeded exactly as he could wish. Mons. and Madame de Neufpont both thought, upon mature deliberation, it would be best to allow Ermance to follow her own inclinations. Thus did Seli-court, to appearance, lay them under an obligation by accepting their daughter's hand.

We

We shall now return to Adolphus, who retired for the night soon after his father left him. It was the beginning of October, and very cold for the season; still he found as little inclination to rest as during the sultry night in August he had spent at Ypres. Ermance alone occupied his mind, as upon the former occasion. He could hardly believe the person he had seen at the hotel de Neufpont and the lovely canoness he had parted from with such regret, were one and the same person:—what joy sparkled in her eyes when she joined him in the garden; and how vainly she strove to hide her dejection when he took his leave of her;—what could have occasioned such an alteration in her behaviour, and the absolute horror she seemed to feel at the thoughts of becoming his wife—“Death would be preferable, in any shape, to a union with him!—It certainly occurred, while revolving this expression in his mind, that Palmira might have imbibed a similar prejudice against him, though she had not chose with equal frank-

ness to acknowledge her sentiments. This reflection made him seriously uneasy; and from the moment it came across him, he determined to insist upon Madame de Neutpont's convincing her she need not bury herself in a cloister to avoid a marriage with him, as he had never felt at all inclined to force her, or any other woman, to the altar.

Without having closed his eyes, he rose at day-break, and the morning being fine, rambled about till his father and mother's breakfast time, wishing to recover his natural colour, and gain spirits for the interview. He assumed a gaiety when he entered highly pleasing, and had brought himself to fancy Ermance was perfectly indifferent to him, and that his vexation arose from various other motives; all seemed to avoid the disagreeable subject, therefore no one mentioned their over-night's visit.

As soon as breakfast was over, Adolphus retired with his mother, and imparted his present

present uneasiness to her; and that it was more than probable that Palmira had communicated the aversion she felt for him to Ermance; indeed that was the most favourable way he could account for the behaviour of the latter.

“ I can’t think Palmira capable of prejudicing her sister against you, my dear Adolphus,” said the Duchess; “ nor can I suppose Madame de l’Hotelfain, to whose bigotry I attribute her strange resolution, tried to lower you in her esteem; besides, she assured me when I saw her, she was not actuated by any particular dislike to you, but her wish to take the veil arose from a conviction that she should be happier in a convent than in the world; this was the only reason she chose to give for her conduct. However, as I am desirous all your doubts should be removed, at least as far as lies in my power, I will set out for Senlis this very morning, and endeavour to fathom the mys-

tery which seems predominant in her's and her sister's behaviour."

"Allow me to accompany you, my dear ma'am," said Adolphus; "not that I suppose I shall have the advantage of seeing Mademoiselle de Moncove, but I owe Madame de l'Hotelsain a visit; besides I shall be sooner relieved from my present state of anxiety."

"Your last argument is unanswerable," said the Duchefs, "or else I can't think you are sufficiently indebted to Madame de l'Hotelsain to make even a visit of ceremony at all necessary. She certainly confirmed Palmira in her resolution to take the veil, contrary to the wishes of her family; therefore I don't feel myself at all obliged to her mistaken zeal; but I will order my carriage and if you have no objection, you shall accompany me to the hotel de Neufpont; you will not see Ermance, and my poor friend will be particularly flattered with a visit from you at this juncture; we will communicate your fears to her, and I have no doubt she
wil

will accompany us, if she can make it convenient.

Adolphus approved of every thing his mother proposed, and they soon set out, found Madame de Neufpont in very low spirits, and unable to restrain her tears while she paid her compliments. The Duchess soon explained the motives of her visit.

Madame de Neufpont said she was ready to accompany them whenever they liked, protesting the conduct of both her daughters was so very incomprehensible, she could only suppose them mad: however, she thought the Duke ought to be satisfied, though she never had any reason to imagine Palmira entertained a dread of being forced to marry him against her will. "Perhaps she may not chuse to see *me*," she continued; "but I think she won't be so averse to granting *you* that favour, Minette; so pray take the most effectual means to fathom her hitherto impenetrable secret."

“ We will be guided by circumstances, my best friend,” said Madame de St. Piene; get ready for your journey, and expect us in less than two hours.”

Upon their return home, she communicated their intentions to the Duke, who approved of every thing likely to be at all conducive to his son's satisfaction.

Between one and two they set out for Senlis. Madame de St. Piene tried to to enliven her companions ; but Adolphus was too much absorbed in his own reflections, and Madame de Neufpont too much hurt by the conduct of her children, to allow her endeavours to meet with the success they deserved. They reached the Abbey at dusk, too late for its holy inhabitants to receive visitors ; they took up their abode in apartments allotted for the reception of strangers, and were received and treated with every mark of respect by the confessor, who spoke in very high terms of Mademoiselle de Mon-

cove; yet gave the Marchioness to understand he was not at all accessory to the resolution she had formed from, in his opinion, the purest and most disinterested motives.

“Why, as I can’t foresee she will be any gainer by taking the veil,” said the Marchioness, “I give her all the credit she deserves for her disinterestedness; and have as little doubt, sir, of the purity of her motives as you, still I think her, in many respects, inexcusable; and, at all events, I shall never be induced to consent to her taking her last vows these three years.”

The Confessor was perfectly of the Marchioness’s opinion; and many things might happen in that interim to induce Mademoiselle de Moncove to alter her mind.

“I positively think young people should be allowed the same liberty in a convent they are in a chapter house,” said the Duchess; let them profess and wear the

H 6

habit,

habit, and perform the duties of a recluse ; but I would not have them take the last vows till they are of an age to be thoroughly convinced of the sincerity of their vocation."

This subject served them for conversation till they retired for the night, and early the next morning, Madame de St. Piene requested a private audience of her once favourite Palmira, who immediately obeyed the summons, and seemed excessively happy to see the Duchefs, who thanked her in the most flattering terms for the speed with which she had complied with her request ; then told her she came ambassadress from her mother and the Duke de Civrac, who were both in the Abbey, but would neither of them intrude upon her, without her express permission.

" I shall always, your Grace, esteem a visit from my mother as the greatest favour she can confer upon me," said the pensive Palmira ;

Palmira ; but must intreat to be excused seeing the Duke. Believe me, my ever kind and indulgent Monitrefs, I am not actuated by obstinacy in my refusal to admit your son ; but as many late incidents have combined to confirm me in the resolution I have formed, he must excuse me not putting it in his power to make me repent a design I am more than ever determined to execute."

Notwithstanding the firmness she displayed, the tears she in vain endeavoured to disperse found their way down her cheeks, and strongly excited the compassion of the Duchess, who in the most gentle accents entreated her to be composed. " Believe me, my lovely young friend, my son wishes still less than myself to distress you ; but your determination to take the veil makes him excessively uneasy, because he begins to fear it originated in a personal dislike to him ; he has, therefore, empowered me to assure you, that, much as he once wished to

be related to Mons. and Madame de Neufpont, he has now, since he finds it incompatible with the happiness of their daughters, relinquished every hope of that nature: Therefore, my dearest Palmira, if dread of your approaching marriage had any share in the resolution you have formed, remember all such apprehensions ought now to cease; your father and mother entreat you will now relinquish the rash design; you may meet with many men in the great world worthy to make you happy; and consider how greatly you will have it in your power to contribute to your fond mother's felicity. She is almost broken hearted at present, for your sister is determined to follow the example you have set, if she is not allowed to pursue the bent of her own inclinations, and has declared a violent passion for your cousin, the Count de Selicourt. As you always corresponded, I need not tell you she was to have become the bond of union between the two families; but whether she has imbibed the same prejudices my son fears, which have
drove

drove you to seek refuge in a cloister; or has discovered some failings in Adolphus, from which no man can be exempt, though they may not be ascertained; she has given the strongest proofs of her dislike, nay, almost aversion for him; and has, as I before told you, acknowledged the most decided preference for her cousin."

"You astonish me, madam," said Palmira, whose countenance convinced the Duchess the intelligence really surprised her; "my sister and I corresponded very regularly till within these last ten days, and her letters were certainly the occasion of my——" She paused, and seemed to have said more than she intended.

"Why this hesitation, my dear Palmira," said the Duchess; believe me I shall not attempt to plead his cause; if my son's doubts are verified, you communicated your sentiments to Ermance; what could be more natural. I am only sorry you judged him from report. But if you did not think him likely to promote your happiness, you would
have

have been much to blame to accept his hand. Still I can't approve of your wish to take the veil."

"Your Grace quite misunderstands me," said Palmira, "and strangely misinterprets my words and actions; there is not a nobleman in the kingdom of whom I have so high an opinion as of the Duke de Civrac. Can you suppose I endeavoured to set my sister against him? how little do I deserve such an accusation, bursting into tears as she ceased speaking.

"Why this agitation, my dearest, my best Palmira?" said the Duchess; "I came to soothe not distress you, my child; therefore, why this reserve? my discretion you surely can't doubt; you have already removed a great weight from my mind;——"

Without allowing the Duchess to finish her sentence, Palmira, still drowned in tears, flung herself at her feet; Madame de St. Piene raised her, and pressed her to her bosom in silence.—"Let me hope you still think
me

me worthy your confidence my dearest Palmira ; and that you no longer mean to persist in secluding yourself from your indulgent parents."

"Palmira had hid her face to give way to her emotion ; but now raising her head, and fixing her fine eyes upon the Duchefs, said, "Forgive my past reserve, my dearest second mother ; and listen to what I have to alledge in extenuation of my late obstinate silence ; believe me it was prompted by an unfeigned desire to contribute, as I supposed, to the happiness of the man you imagine I endeavoured to depreciate in my sister's eyes"

The Duchefs, highly flattered, pressed the agitated Palmira once more to her bosom, and entreated she would proceed, as what she had already said had strongly excited her curiosity.

Thus encouraged, she ventured to explain herself farther "I need not expatiate, my dear madam, upon the confidential affection

tion that has ever subsisted between Ermance and me ; though, believe, I can't assign one satisfactory reason for her late conduct, nor have I heard from her since she conceived this violent prejudice in favour of our cousin ; but the first letter I received from her after her return from Ypres, gave me every reason to suppose the Duke had made that impression she now acknowledges the Count de Selicourt has done upon her heart ; it was replete with his praises, and yet it was easy to perceive she had not gave way to her feelings ; her style was formal, and her congratulations upon my future prospects studied, and I thought insincere. I answered it immediately, and in a manner most likely to induce her to confirm or eradicate the suspicions I had formed. Her next letter convinced me she had disposed of her heart in his favour ; and led me also to suppose, from the account of his behaviour, she was not totally indifferent to him ; though she pretended to attribute the attentions he shewed her to her relationship to me. I shewed
both

both letters to the Abbess, and asked her opinion of Ermance's sentiments respecting the Duke de Civrac ; it perfectly coincided with my own, and I instantly determined to promote their mutual felicity, by feigning a desire I never felt, to take the veil. Convinced what would be the consequence of my resolution, I should indeed have thought it highly culpable to have accepted the Duke's hand while I had every reason to believe fulfilling his first engagements would have made him miserable, though I knew his honour would prevent him from making any attempt to break them, while he thought them sanctioned by my consent. I had never seen his Grace, therefore my predilection in his favour, I thought, could not be so strong as my sister's. Still her letters placed him in so amiable a light—but why need I expatiate upon his merits to you, madam, who are so thoroughly acquainted with all his excellent qualities ; the hopes I entertained of contributing to his felicity, inspired
me

me with sufficient fortitude to prefer his and my mother's happiness to my own.

The Duchess, delighted with this unexpected solution of her behaviour, folded her once more in her arms: and assured her, such sentiments would render her still dearer than ever to the Marquis and Marchioness; then hastened to impart all she had learned to her favourite friend, who was, with Adolphus, impatiently waiting the result of the conference in an outward apartment. The Duchess, perfectly capable of the task, did the utmost justice to the noble principles which had actuated the behaviour of Palmira; and, though with infinite delicacy, gave Adolphus to understand, he had no reason to dread a refusal if he was inclined to renew his first engagements.

Madame de Neufpont was in raptures during the Duchess's recital, and Adolphus greatly increased her joy, by expressing the utmost admiration for Palmira, and entreating

ing

ing to be introduced to her. Looking at the Marchioness, "I shall place my cause in your's and my mother's hands, fair lady; if the lovely Palmira will deign to accept of me after believing I once felt a sentiment of preference in favour of her sister, I shall think myself highly indebted to your joint eloquence."

"We won't interfere in the matter, my dearest Adolphus," said the overjoyed Marchioness; "you shall plead your own cause. Palmira shall return with us to Paris; and I hope, in less than a month, she will be your daughter, and this, Minette, will be my son. But I am all impatience to see her; I must have a short *tete-a-tete* with her before I gratify the first wish of my heart, which is to introduce her to your notice, my dear Duke."

She now left Adolphus and his mother, and hastened into the Abbess's apartments, with whom she found Palmira, and before whom she made no scruple of giving way to
her

fondness for her daughter; mentioned the impression her late behaviour had made upon the Duke de Civrac, and assured her she alone was capable of making him happy; acknowledged he had been as much deceived as she could have been, respecting her sister's sentiments, who would certainly now be permitted to bestow her hand upon the man in whose favour, as she said, she had already disposed of her heart. After another tender embrace, she hastened in search of the Duchefs and Adolphus; the latter having spent two restless nights, and not paying much regard to his dress, did not appear to the advantage he would otherwise have done. Madame de Neufpont rallied him most unmercifully upon his looks and dishabille. "Why I think Mademoiselle de Moncove will no longer be astonished at the rejection you so lately met with; it is very fortunate the Count de Selicourt did not accompany us."

"I am only afraid Palmira will find I fall so very short of the description you gave of
me

me, my dear madam (looking at his mother) she will pronounce me a miserable copy of an excellent picture."

"Come along," said the Marchioness, "your humility is truly ridiculous;" taking his arm, and hurrying with him towards the Abbess's apartments.

Palmira was taller, and a much more regular beauty than Ermance; and though not so gay, was infinitely her superior in point of accomplishment, and still more so in point of mind. The beloved pupil of Madame de St. Piene, her manners bore a striking resemblance to the Duchess's. Prepared to revere the principles of Palmira, Adolphus soon began to admire her; their mutual embarrassment was truly flattering, and greatly prepossessed them in each others favour; and when they joined in the general conversation, each secretly admired the remarks of the other; and Adolphus was soon convinced, had he soon both sisters at Ypres,

Palmira

Palmira alone would have received his homage.

At the end of two hours, the Duchefs mentioned their return to Paris, knowing how happy the tidings they had to communicate would make the Duke and Marquis. Madame de Neufpont wished Palmira to have returned with them, but at her particular request, in which she was seconded by the Abbefs, she was left behind for a few days ; so, after taking various refreshments, they fet out upon their return, having given Palmira their words of honour, her reasons for having feigned a vocation she never felt, should for ever remain a secret to Ermance : this request added to the esteem Adolphus felt she had inspired him with.

They were no sooner upon the road, than the two once more happy mothers, entreated Adolphus would give them his real opinion of their favourite Palmira.

I

“ To

“ To say I am in love, would expose me very justly to the raillery of Madame de Neufpont ; yet esteem is a very cold term to express the admiration I feel for Mademoiselle de Moncove ; and if she can overlook my late *égarements du cœur*,* she shall have no reason to repent her condescension in my favour. As I had never seen her when I suffered myself to be captivated by the infantine artless gaiety of Ermance, she may be inclined to forgive me ; and, in that case, I am convinced we shall be very happy. And if you think, my dear Marchioness, I shall not give her reason to accuse me of presumption, I will renew my former engagements with the Marquis.”

Madame de Neufpont laughed at his scruples, and protested she never was so happy in her life, except on the evening she had past at St. Juste, “ And as for Ermance,” she continued, “ who has deceived us all,

VOL. III.

I

and

* Errors of the heart.

and led us all, more or less, to play the fool, we will now resign that part to her for life; she may either marry her cousin, or take the veil, which she chooses; for I shall never forgive the affected joy she assumed when I imparted her future prospect to her at Bourbourg. If Selicourt was not the most frank of all human beings, for he won't even take the trouble to conceal his faults, I should fancy he had turned the silly girl's head, or taken advantage of her inexperience, but joking apart, I do think his mere *compliments d'usage* struck her as expressions of admiration addressed to her beauty, and prepossessed her in favour of so discerning a mortal. They were often *tete-a-tete* during our stay at Bourbourg; and he might, if he found she listened to him, delight in talking nonsense to her."

"I think you do your daughter injustice, *belle Marquise*," said Adolphus; is it not very possible the Count was, like myself, fascinated by her vivacity, and the novelty of her remark; and might not he endeavour
to

prepossess her with similar sentiments in his favour ; she was under no absolute engagement, and he can be very agreeable when he chuses."

" You will not persuade me, Duke, he was ever in love with any thing but himself ; the chit's folly might amuse him, and he may, if the Marquis asks it as a great favour, condescend to become our son-in-law ; but take my word for it, he cares as little for Ermance as I do for Madame de l'Hotelsain, who in our bustle, we all forgot to visit."

This reflection set the Duchesse and Adolphus laughing ; but as they meant to return very speedily to Senlis, they determined to repair their impoliteness the next time they went to the Abbey.

C H A P. X.

THE Duke de St. Piene and the Marquis de Neufpont were at the former's hotel, When this gay trio reached Paris, and thither they drove by mutual consent, first Madame de Neufpont chose to be spokeswoman upon the occasion, and declared she should never forgive the Duke de St. Piene, if he did not participate in her felicity.

Both the Marquis and he bestowed the highest praises upon Palmira; and each seemed to think her truly deserving Adolphus; who spoke of her in the most flattering

ing

ing terms, and entreated the Marquis would allow him to ratify all his former engagements; such a wish added considerably to the Marquis's happiness, and, after spending a most agreeable evening, retired with his wife to rejoice at the unexpected discovery Ermance's idle behaviour had induced her sister to make.

The Duke de St. Piene rather wished his son had not been in such haste to dispose of his liberty; therefore before he took leave of him for the night, took him into his study, and entreated he would reflect seriously before he engaged himself too far. he had still an honourable retreat; Palmira had certainly behaved very nobly, yet he wished him to study her disposition before he gave her his hand: was not his present precipitation as much the effect of pique as esteem for her good qualities.

Adolphus, fully sensible of the kind motive that instigated his father, soon removed

all his fears; A woman of the age of Palmira, who could prefer her sister's happiness to her own, must make an excellent wife; as their union would be founded upon mutual esteem, he thought they had every prospect of being happy in the conjugal state.

The Duke, perfectly satisfied, wished to have mentioned the marriage settlements he intended to make, a subject Adolphus would not listen to, his present income was more than adequate to his rank in life; he therefore entreated the Duke would divide the superfluity of his fortune between his brother and sister's; the latter were particularly deserving of his love, and he should almost consider it as a robbery were he to accept his father's generous proposal. He then wished him a good night, and drove home, reflecting upon the various changes his matrimonial prospects had already undergone, leaving the Duke in admiration of the disinterestedness he had displayed upon this and every other occasion.

Madame

Madame de St. Piene, like her husband, wished Adolphus had allowed himself more time for deliberation; and was equally anxious to have a little private conversation with him. The next morning, therefore, she drove to his hotel before he was stirring; and when he joined her, he expressed his surprise at so early though welcome a visit; she acknowledged her anxiety for his peace of mind had brought her. The Duke and she had had a long conversation after they retired for the night; and they both thought there was every reason to expect Ermance would soon repent the premature declaration she had made in favour of the Count de Selicourt; in that case, might not he repent his having renewed his former engagements?

“Never, my dear mother; were Ermance herself to assure me she had mistaken the nature of her sentiments with regard to the Count de Selicourt; nay, that my vanity had not misled me in the conjectures I
14
formed

formed at Ypres, I would not marry her. After what passed, can you suppose, my dearest madam, I should even wish to obtain the hand of a person who has declared, "*death, in any shape, would be preferable to such an union?*"—No, believe me, I would become a member of the society of La Frappe in preference. I have a very high opinion of Palmira, and make no doubt we shall be very happy; she has given a very strong proof of the excellence of her principles, and the benevolence of her temper. I shall ever reflect with pleasure upon the circumstance to which I owe her hand. I hope, my dear madam, you will do all in your power to facilitate a speedy conclusion; I can't bear suspense."

Madame de St. Piene promised to accelerate so desirable an event to the utmost of her power; assuring him Palmira was infinitely superior to every species of affectation that would induce her to feign a reluctance
that

to gratify wishes coinciding, she hoped, with her own.

From the hotel de St. Firmin, she proceeded to her friend's, found the Marchioness alone, who assured her she had been arranging plans ever since they parted; that the Marquis was overjoyed, and had desired her to inform the Duchess, he was eager to convince the Duke de Civrac how much he thought himself honoured by the disclosure of his sentiments the preceding evening.

“The Duke de St. Piene should have a *carte blanche* respecting settlements; but he shall make fine speeches for himself,” said the once more gay Madame de Neufpont; he is now disposing of his youngest daughter to the man of her choice; for yesterday the Count paid him a visit, and hinted it was easy to guess from whom he had had his information; he understood the projected alliance between the Duke de Civrac and Ermance was not likely to take place.”

The

The Marquis, who now seriously thinks he was the occasion of her folly, answered him in the affirmative. He modestly proposed himself to supply his Grace's place; talked a vast deal of love and honour; and was very much pleased when the Marquis told him he only wished to consult me before he disposed of our daughter; but as he did not foresee I was likely to object to his proposal, promised to give him a final answer this morning. You are sure, Minette, I did not wish to drive the love-sick girl nor her tender swain to extremities; therefore consented to their mutual wishes with a very good grace: have only entreated the Marquis would not mention the revolution that has taken place in the sentiments of Palmira. We must suppose the Count too much in love to think of fortune; and the Neufpont title and estates at the Marquis's death, must console him for the moderate portion he will now receive with Ermance; for I don't think he ought to be rewarded for trying, as the Marquis is convinced he did,

to

to rival your son ; and as for the romantic girl, she is too much in love to think of her own interest, and I dare say would be shocked at the word settlement ; for what chit at her age would not trust to her lover's honour. But here comes the Marquis, he has heard you are with me, so has hurried over his business with Selicourt."

The Marquis seemed in excellent spirits, and rejoiced to find Adolphus was even impatient to fulfil the most sanguine hope he had ever formed.

"I only wish they would be married this evening," said the Marchioness ; "for I protest my happiness will not be complete till the knot is tied. Suppose the ceremony is performed privately, and the wedding kept a secret till all the bridal paraphernalia is complete."

"I dare say your proposal will meet the approbation of the young people, my dear friend," said the Duchess.

The Marquis entered into several necessary details, and said he would immediately settle his estate in Flanders upon the Duke.

The Duchess entreated he would talk all those matters over with her husband ; what they agreed upon would be sure to meet the approbation of Adolphus and herself.

“Then to-morrow we will return to Senlis, Minette, and consult with Palmira ; I am sure we shall find her ready to oblige us ; and I trust this marriage, though not formed under the auspices of the blind god, will be quite as fortunate as any at which that urchin presides. Talking of love, what have you done with that most ardent of all lovers, the Count de Selicourt, Marquis ?”

“I sent him to pour forth his raptures at the feet of his divinity ; more convinced than ever, from the pains he took to convince me of the disinterestedness of his passion, that his devoirs are all paid to our sup-
of

posed heiress, and not to the beauty or wit of his Mistress; how he managed to turn the flighty girl's brain, he best knows. However, I was not so explicit with him respecting settlements; merely told him his proposals would make no alteration in my intentions respecting her fortune. He was too anxious to communicate his happy prospects to Ermance, to ask any further explanation; therefore we must suppose he will rejoice when he finds he will have it so much in his power to convince her of the sincerity of his passion."

The Duchesse and Marchioness were highly diverted by the Marquis's account of Selicourt's behaviour.

Next day, as they had agreed, they proceeded to Senlis. Every preparation was privately conducted; and within a fortnight Adolphus and Palmira were married by the Bishop of Ypres, in the church of the Abbey of Senlis. Immediately after the ceremony,
they

they set out for Paris, Palmira still bearing the name of Mademoiselle de Moncove, keeping the wedding a secret till every necessary decoration etiquette requires upon such occasions, was ready.

During this interval, Palmira was to take up her residence with the Duke and Duchess, which would be very natural; and on the evening of her arrival at Paris, the Marquis mentioned her approaching nuptials to the Count and Ermance; adding, he would give a *fete* to all his friends and acquaintance the ensuing week upon the joyful occasion, and to introduce Palmira as the destined bride of the Duke de Civrac.

This unexpected intelligence almost annihilated the Count, and greatly astonished Ermance, who had not the slightest idea her sister entertained any thoughts of quitting her convent; she had written to her twice since her arrival at Paris, and mentioned her intended marriage with Selicourt. Palmira,

in answer, had congratulated her upon being permitted to give way to the dictates of her heart in so important an occasion; but had said nothing respecting her future prospects. Ermance, therefore concluded she had been almost freed from her retreat, to gratify the Marchioness's wish to be related to Madame de St. Piene.

The Count neither knew what to think nor do, and was excessively angry he had suffered himself to be drawn to make proposals to the Marquis for Ermance, while there was a possibility Palmira might alter her mind; he ought to have reflected, there was every reason to suppose she would repent the foolish resolution she had formed; and he ought to have allowed the Duke to have married her sister; he might then have stood a chance of being united to Palmira, who would now, of course, be again considered as the eldest daughter of the Marquis de Neufpont, and provided for accordingly: now he had no reason to expect the Marquis would
bestow

bestow any considerable fortune upon Ermance, particularly as he was his heir; might possibly give her little more than her wedding clothes, and the hundred thousand crowns* settled, by the Marquis's marriage articles, upon her, or any younger children, yet think he did an honour in bestowing the portionless girl upon him: then he had talked of love and nonsense to the Marquis; how could he retreat from the positive declarations he had made in favour of this foolish chit, whom he did not care three straws about. These reflections drove him half mad, though he had art to conceal his vexation.

On the Sunday after her arrival at Paris, he was introduced to Palmira, who dined at her father's, with all her husband's family. The Marquis presented him to her as her brother-in-law; and the Duke de Civrac paid his respects to Ermance in the same

* Twelve thousand pounds sterling.

character ; laughed at her a little about the fears she had displayed when she looked upon him as her lover ; and hoped she would restore him to that place he held in her esteem, at Ypres, when she thought him the intended husband of the lovely Palmira.

This was the first time Ermance had seen him since the evening she had chose to declare her absolute abhorrence of him. Selicourt had not risen in her opinion since he was become her lover ; having once gained his point, he merely paid his court in form ; sent her *salon l'usage*, a very handsome *bouquet* every morning, and enquired, during the course of the day, after her health. He had exhausted his stock of compliments at Bourbourg, and no longer stimulated by a wish to rival the Duke de Civrac, was become a cool admirer, before he learned Palmira had been prevailed upon to endeavour to console his Grace, and had been more than indifferent since he heard the news confirmed.

Ermance

Ermance drew comparisons between the two gentlemen by no means favourable to the Count; and her lover was still more struck with the superior beauty of Palmira: could he have made such a proposal, how gladly would he have changed mistresses with the Duke: but as this was not practicable, he turned his thoughts wholly upon bringing so desirable an event about without forfeiting his pretensions to honour. The Duke, though particularly attentive to Palmira, he was convinced, could not be in love: Ermance had been the woman of his choice, and it would be very easy to pique her, and make her thoughts revert into their former channel; she would then endeavour to attract the Duke's attention; and he, flattered by her advances, would certainly, if necessary, connive at his playing the same arts upon Palmira he had done with such success upon Ermance; and if the latter found herself slighted by both, pique or despair might induce her to increase the holy
sister-

sisterhood of nuns, and this would set him at liberty.

During the Sunday he narrowly scrutinized the behaviour of the Duke and Palmira, and soon discovered she was very much in love with this truly formidable rival; this rather discouraged him, till he reflected Ermance had been equally so; and the late determination of Palmira was, in his opinion, no proof of her judgment. He could make use of still stronger argument in his own favour than upon the former occasion; and only wished the Duke would absent himself for a few days, when in that time he might eradicate every tender sentiment in Palmira now felt in his favour. The behaviour of Adolphus was the mere result of his refined politeness, he presumed; for he knew he was incapable of affecting a passion he did not feel; and would, most likely, on this occasion, think himself highly obliged to him for enabling him to get off honourably from engagements he could only have consented to
at

at the intercession of his family; and he might say to the Marquis, that compassion induced him to make his late proposals, and plead violent love for the divine Palmira as an excuse for his inconstancy towards her sister. Such were the reflections and determinations of Selicourt; who displayed all his graces, and did every thing in his power to attract the attention of Palmira whenever he found an opportunity unobserved by the rest of the company.

Next day, in conformity to his present plan, he affected the utmost indifference towards Ermance, and forebore to visit her on the following day. The young canonesse could not help remarking his behaviour; and before the day of the *fete*, seriously repented she had ever acknowledged a predilection she no longer felt in his favour.

The

The entertainment her father gave his friends, was a ball and supper; and the Duke de Civrac looked to infinite more advantage upon this occasion, Ermance thought, than even at the dedication of the church at Ypres; he was much more drest, and in much better spirits; every one present seemed eager to attract his notice, and enjoy his conversation. He received the general compliments, upon the event which had given rise to this *fete*, with a gaiety truly flattering to Palmira, with whom he danced frequently during the evening, and always seemed to resign her hand with reluctance. In short he appeared in so different a light from the picture the Count de Selicourt had drawn of him at Bourbourg, that all her former sentiments were revived, and she felt she envied Palmira the happiness she seemed to enjoy far more than she did her future prospects at Bourbourg. She was low-spirited, and at last refused to
join

join in the dance, under pretence of a headach, which she attributed to the heat of the rooms. What eloquent arguments the Duke must have made use of to have thus been able to induce Palmira to quit the Abbey; and how happy she seemed while listening to his animated discourse;—but she reflected her sister had not seen the Duke when she formed her resolution, and was now persuaded, he had only to appear to be admired. Who could resist such a man when he spoke of love?—what could she be thinking of when she suffered Selicourt to deceive her so egregiously respecting the Duke's real character?—and she began to fancy she should soon hate *him* as much as she had supposed she loved him. She longed to be alone to give way to her tears; and too artless still to disguise her real sentiments, she tried the remainder of the evening, by every innocent art, to captivate the man she had once rejected.

Adolphus,

Adolphus, who in the pure mind of Palmira saw a mirror that reflected every virtue, no longer paid the slightest attention to the marked advances of Ermance; which Selicourt noticed and enjoyed, and now came to a serious resolution to exert his talents for intrigue upon the gentle interesting Palmira.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

IT may now be necessary to return to Bazile, who, having spent three weeks at Havre, and wrote twice as many letters in that time to his father, began to be seriously uneasy at not receiving any answers; not but he found he could have amused himself very well had he had plenty of money, but the trifle the old surgeon had furnished him with was soon gone, and he was even at a loss how to get back to Dunkirk. What could be the occasion of his father's not writing?—he might be ill; but in that case he would most likely have sent for him home,
at

as his sister's could have wrote if he was unable. Berenger was no doubt returned, and, angry at having been left in the lurch, he might have turned informer; or Vanval, anxious to display his generosity, might, notwithstanding his solemn promises, have revealed all he knew to Mr. de Melac.

These disagreeable reflections made Bazile very thoughtful. His dejection was noticed by the relation at whose house he resided. At first he solely attributed it to his fears for his father's health; and expressed his hopes the next post would relieve his anxiety. This was so very plausible an excuse for his want of spirits, the whole family endeavoured to console him. At last his anxiety became so great, he said he must set out to learn what had thus prevented his father from keeping his word with him; adding, he had promised to send him a bill of credit.

His relations readily offered to supply his deficiency in the article of money ; and next day he set out post upon his return, having assured them they should hear from him in the course of a few days. As his impatience would not allow him to stop an hour upon the road, his journey was far from agreeable ; he particularly wished to know whether his father had been made acquainted with his late jaunt to Paris ; felt he should be very much at a loss to account for his smart cabriolet ; but soon determined to drive to the post-house, and leave his carriage there ; as he was in boots, he might say he had rode from Havre, if his father did not know Vanval had lent him a carriage ; he therefore came to resolution to visit the old surgeon before he went home, alighted at the post-house, and then hastened to Vanval's.

The old man had seen him coming ; his sister therefore, by his orders, went to the door ; she could only speak Flemish, but made Bazile understand her brother was not
at

at
wo
fro
gre
bit
con
tho
all
him

F
clerk

T
he f
joke
“
offen

H
looks
to la
“ M
Sir.”

at home. To have questioned her, he knew, would be useless, therefore turned hastily from her, and not chusing to knock at the great gates of the house his father had inhabited, he walked into the clerks office, which communicated with the street; he found all those he had left seated at their desks; but all seemed to express their surprise at seeing him.

His first question, addressed to the head clerk, was, "Where is my father?"

They looked at each other, and the man he spoke to answered, "That is an excellent joke, Mr. Bazile, you ought to know best."

"I am not in a joking humour," said the offended Bazile, repeating his question.

His serious, or more properly frightened looks amused them so much they burst into laughter; and the head clerk replied—"Mr. de Melac left Dunkirk six weeks ago Sir."

"What do you mean? where is he gone? I did not know he was going any journey when I left home."

"If you really are as ignorant as you pretend to be, Mr. Bazile," said the man, "it is wonderful? but all my companions can vouch for the truth of what I have advanced. We did not know he was going never to return when he set out; indeed we only understood he was going into the country for a few days."

"Gone, never to return! Why, where are my sisters?"

"They have been gone a month tomorrow."

"Astonishing!"

"And Madame des Ormes went with them, sir."

Bazile was absolutely petrified, and remained silent for a minute or more before he ventured to put another question; then, in a trembling voice, "Pray who has the care of the business during my father's absence?"

"The

"The new Receiver General, sir, who is appointed in his stead, Mr. Aurelly."

"Aurelly!" repeated Bazile, "I have seen that gentleman at my father's; he will be able to satisfy my doubts;—pray where is he?"

"At home I believe, sir," said the head clerk; shall I enquire?"

"Pray do."

"The man soon returned—"Mr. Aurelly was within alone."

Bazile went into the house, and upon declaring his name, was shewn into the Receiver General's private study, who received him with the utmost politeness, and begged to know what had procured him the honour of this visit.

Bazile was very much at a loss what to say; at last he stammered out—"My father, I have been informed, sir, has resigned the place he so lately held."

"He has, sir," said Mr. Aurelly.

“ And did he leave neither a letter nor message for me, sir ?”

“ None, that I know of, Mr. Bazile ; at least none were committed to my care.”

“ Good heavens ! what could have induced my father to keep me thus in ignorance of his designs, and even where he now is ?” said the frightened Bazile, bursting into tears.

Mr. Aurelly seemed shocked, and appeared to participate in his surprize.

When Bazile could speak—“ and don’t you really know where I can find my father, sir ?” turning to that gentleman.

“ Upon my word, sir, I can only refer you to the Duke de St. Piene, Minister *des Affaires Etrangères*, who did me the honour to appoint me to succeed Mr. de Melac ; and who desired me take possession of every thing as it stood, as he would be accountable to my predecessor : his Grace may be able to satisfy your curiosity ; I really am
not ;

not ; but shall be very happy to accommodate you with an apartment during your stay at Dunkirk, or till you have settled in your own mind what steps you mean to take."

The poor terrified Bazile was hardly able to thank the Receiver General for this polite offer ; but said, " certainly some of my father's former friends know where he is gone."

Finding he was not likely to gain any further information from Mr. Aurelly, he hastened back to Vanval's, determined to wait his return, in hopes he had heard from his father since his departure, though he reflected he was at Paris, or at least upon the road thither when Mr. de Melac left Dunkirk.

Vanval, who wished him to see Mr. Aurelly first, knowing exactly the reception he would meet with, was now prepared to receive him, welcomed him very cordially ;

then, surveying his down-cast looks, cried out—"I hope the cabriolet has not met with any misfortune? but never mind, man, if it has, there are wheel-wrights and coach-makers in plenty at Dunkirk, so it will be easily repaired. But how does your worthy father and all his good family, and where have they taken up their abode? I long to hear what made my good friend leave Dunkirk in such a hurry. Come, sit down and answer all my questions."

Bazile looked aghast, and was unable to speak.

"Why, what ails you?" said Vanval;" "I believe you are in need of my advice in the medical way," taking his hand, and beginning to feel his pulse: "you are very much agitated; I believe you must lose a little blood."

Bazile again burst into tears, and would have retired to one of the windows, had not the

the surgeon made him sit down, when he enquired very earnestly what was the matter.

“ Can you tell me where my father is ? ”
at last fobbed out Bazile.

The surgeon started at the question.—
“ What, don't you come from Mr. de Melac ? ”

Bazile shook his head.

“ Why you astonish me ! have you brought me the money I lent you ? pray where is my carriage ? you have not sold it I hope ? ”

“ No, no, my dear friend, it is very safe at the post-house, ”

“ I am happy to hear that ; but where are the three hundred livres I lent you ? ”

Bazile looked upon the ground.

“Why the money is not there,” said the surgeon;—“and you really don’t know where Mr. de Melac now is?”

“Upon my honour I know no more than the child unborn,” said Bazile.

“Had you never forfeited your word with that excellent man?” said the surgeon, “I am certain you would not have been thus abandoned; I really can’t wonder at his behaviour, when I reflect how undeserving you have proved yourself of his paternal care. Young men like you are the ruin of their parents. Mr. de Melac was of my opinion, I suppose, so has prudently left you to shift for yourself; he, no doubt, has heard of your late freaks, therefore gave up all hopes of your reformation. What do you mean to do? for I can assure you no one here knows either why or wherefore your father left Dunkirk, nor where he now is. I have been strict in my enquiries, anxious, as you may suppose, about my money; so what do you mean to do? have you any cash left?”

“Only

“Only fifteen livres ; here it is in part ; I will pay the rest as as soon as I am able.”

“No, no,” said the surgeon, “if that is all you have got, pray keep it ; I don’t like to receive my debts by dribblets. We must consider what is to be done ; I have a spare bed—you shall occupy Julien’s apartment : and if we can’t learn any tidings of your father, I think you must follow his example, and commence surgeon ; I will instruct you gratis, and receive the profits of your labour for the first two years, when you begin to practice.”

Vanval looked so serious, Bazile had not a doubt but what he was in earnest ; and, as he really neither knew what to do, or what course to steer, agreed to be totally guided by him, and do every thing he desired till his father once more deigned to acknowledge him. If he would but forgive his late unpardonable errors, his only study in future should be to deserve his love, as he was now perfectly convinced his father had acted

thus to punish him for his hitherto incorrigible follies.

“ Now you talk as you ought to do ; have you seen Mr. Aurelly.”

“ Yes, my dear friend ; and he referred me to some Duke who had appointed him in the place of my father.”

“ Why I suppose, as every body else does, the Duke de Civrac knows where Mr. de Melac is, and to him I would have you apply.”

“ Mr. Aurelly mentioned some other name ; but I will set out immediately for Paris, and entreat the Duke de Civrac woul relieve me from my present horrid state of suspense.”

“ Don't be in such haste,” said Vanval ; fifteen livres won't go a great way towards paying your travelling expences. Nor do I think you have any reason to expect his Grace will even receive you after your behaviour at St. Juste. For my own part, all things

things considered, I rather think your father is gone back to Gaudaloupe; so pray how are you to follow him thither?"

"You can't suppose, my dear friend, he would, in that case, have left me behind?"

"Why he found you chose to look upon yourself as your own master, and act, not according to his advice, but that of such wise counsellors as Berenger and his friend; he no longer intends to support you in extravagance; you must now, I suppose, earn your money before you spend it. However, as I sincerely pity you, and you know the old saying *in for a penny, in for a pound*, only have a little patience, and I will accompany you to Paris myself; and should we discover your father's retreat, who knows but, upon your giving me your word of honour, I may become responsible for your future behaviour, and try to make matters up for you once more."

Bazile,

Bazile, very much pleased with these promises, made a thousand protestations which he firmly determined to abide by.

“ Well, well,” said the surgeon, “ time will shew how much your word is to be depended upon ; I have business to mind, so you must excuse me for an hour or two ; but, as you have taken nothing since you came off your journey, my sister shall make you some coffee.”

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

THE surgeon retired to write an account to the Duke of Bazile's arrival, and what passed between them; placed his behaviour and protestations in the most favourable light, and entreated his Grace's further instructions.

This letter he dispatched express, and in three days received an answer by the same means; in which the Duke entreated he would set out immediately for Paris with the penitent Bazile, whom he would conduct to the hotel de St. Firmin; here the Duke de Civrac would be very happy to see him,

him, and would prepare Bazile for the surprise that awaited him.

The moment the surgeon received these instructions, he told the penitent Bazile, he meant to set off next day with him for Paris. The young man had no longer a will of his own, and merely endeavoured to express his gratitude for this unexampled kindness.

During the three days he spent under his roof, he had never ventured without his door, not wishing to see any of his former friends in his present situation, while he was a sort of dependant upon Vanval's bounty. He was very happy when he turned his back upon Dunkirk, and very thoughtful during their journey.

The surgeon did not fail to remind him of the various misfortunes he had met with the last time he travelled that road ; and at Flixcourt he enquired after the horse and cabriolet he had disposed of ; they were both
in

in being, and the landlord offered to restore them, if Bazile would repay him what he he had advanced, and a trifle for the keeping of his miserable beast, who had not done him a day's work since he had him. The surgeon assured the man his young friend was not tempted to take advantage of his kind offer; nor did he mean in future to trust to his own skill in horseflesh.

About two o'clock on the third day, they reached Paris; and as it was not much out of the way, stopped first at the surgeon's old friend's to enquire after his nephew, and to leave their carriage; and from thence they proceeded on foot across the Palais Royal to the hotel de St. Firmin.

The surgeon had forgot, in his haste to deliver up his chaise, that it was past his usual dinner hour, till Bazile observed he was very dry; the fact was, he thought a few glasses of wine would raise his spirits, which

which were very much depressed, as his interview with the Duke de Civrac approached, and secretly wished they might not find him at home; and even acknowledged to the surgeon he dreaded the thoughts of seeing his Grace after what had passed between them at St. Juste. The surgeon laughed at his fears, and told him, drinking wine just then would infallibly spoil his dinner, and he made no doubt they should be asked to dine at the hotel de St. Firmin.

Bazile by no means enjoyed Vanval's railery, but dared not a reply. They soon reached the Rue de Richelieu, and upon delivering their names to the porter, were immediately admitted.

While they waited in a lower apartment, the servant returned who was gone to carry up their names to Adolphus; Bazile said, "I had better stay below Mr. Vanval; you can explain our errand to his Grace." This
the

the surgeon did not chuse to agree to, so upon the servant's entreating they would follow him up stairs, he fairly dragged the trembling youth into the dressing:room.

Adolphus received them with his usual politeness, though Bazile was hardly able to answer any of his kind enquiries. Vanval in his droll way, said, "I must intreat your Grace would excuse my young friend, he is in very great trouble, and we know of no one so likely to relieve his anxiety, which has brought us to Paris, and induced us thus to intrude upon your time."

"You may always command my best services, Mr. Vanval; I shall be very happy if it is in my power to oblige you; pray proceed."

Bazile sighed to find this kind speech was merely addressed to the surgeon, who immediately related Bazile's return to Dunkirk, and his subsequent surprise; and Adolphus had some difficulty to look serious during
the

the recital, Vanval's remarks were so truly ludicrous. However, when he concluded, "since you have interested yourself in this young gentleman's behalf, Mr. Vanval, I will see what can be done; he is certainly at present in a very awkward predicament, and under the greatest obligations to your benevolence."

Bazile's eyes were lowered, his face was lengthened, and the colour forsook his cheeks."

Adolphus, turning to him, said, "perhaps sir, you have not forgot what passed between us at St. Juste; I think I then told you my precepts merely accorded with my practice. You have had the misfortune since that time to lose sight of your excellent father; and I have lately had the inexpressible pleasure of being restored to mine. You, I am well assured, generally acted exactly contrary to your father's advice, nay positive orders; and I neither have, nor mean to take a step
of

of any importance without first consulting mine ; if you are equally fortunate as myself, can you make a similar resolution ?”

The tears stood in Bazile’s eyes while he exclaimed, “ upon my honour, your Grace, I have made very serious promises to Mr. Vanval ; and I swear——”

Adolphus interrupted him ; “ the word of a man of a man of honour does not require to be ratified with an oath, sir : I hope it is in my power to reconcile you once more to your offended father ; but I must consult the Duke de St. Piene, to whom I owe my birth.

Bazile’s countenance brightened by degrees ; his father was certainly in Paris, and no doubt enjoyed a much higher post than the one he had so lately held. The Duke de St. Piene was the nobleman Mr. Aurelly had referred him to ; therefore either his Grace or his son would, no doubt be able to
make

make up the breach between him and his father.

“ You shall immediately accompany me, gentlemen,” said Adolphus, “ to the Duke’s hotel, I don’t wish to prolong Mr. Bazile’s state of suspense ; I can judge of my own feelings of his present sufferings ;” giving orders for his carriage, he wrote three lines to the Duke to prepare him for their arrival, and dispatched his courier, with orders to make haste.

While the horses were putting to, the Duke made a few enquiries after his Dunkirk friends, and listened to some of Vanval’s anecdotes respecting the various noble families resident there ; and in a quarter of an hour, proceeded with the surgeon and Bazile to the Ministers : he was in his study Adolphus was informed ; but fearful his note had not reached him, he left Vanval and Bazile in an outer apartment, while he
stept

stept forward to announce them, and found the Duke prepared to receive them.

“Who is this great man?” said Bazile in a whisper to Vanval the moment they were left alone.

“The first man in the kingdom next our sovereign,” was the answer, “and the Duke de Civrac’s father.”

“Good heaven’s! how am I to address him? pray speak for me, dearest friend.”

“You need no interpreter,” said Vanval, “his Grace understands French.”

Bazile was not allowed time for an answer, as Adolphus returned, saying, pray walk this way, gentlemen, the Duke is rather busy, but he will attend you in a few minutes.”

Bazile took care to keep in the back ground, and remained just within the door, without daring to raise his eyes; the Duke de St. Piene was seated with his back towards

wards him, apparently busy in looking over some papers.

“ You may tell your own story, Mr. Bazile,” said Adolphus in a low voice.

“ Pray do me the favour to speak for me, your Grace,” said Bazile in the utmost agitation; “ indeed, indeed I will ratify every promise you make in my behalf.”

The Minister affected not to attend to their dialogue; and Adolphus stated the reasons which had induced Mr. de Melac junior to apply to him; expatiated very feelingly upon his sorrow; and protested he would readily become answerable for his future good behaviour, if he was once more permitted to throw himself at his father’s feet, to renew the promises he had made to him and Mr. Vanval. “ Have I expressed your sentiments, sir?” said Adolphus, turning to Bazile.

“ Yes, indeed, your Grace; I will——”

At

At that moment he met his father's eyes; his amazement exceeded all description;—he rather retreated than advanced, till the surgeon pulled him forward, and bid him remember what the Duke de Civrac had declared. Thus roused, the astonished Bazile fell upon his knees, began to say something, but his surprise and confusion were so great, he was unable to articulate distinctly.

Had the Duke de St. Priene given way to his feelings, he would have raised the penitent and pressed him to his bosom; but he was too well acquainted with Bazile's disposition to dare give him such convincing proofs of his love; he therefore desired him, in a calm voice, to rise.

The tears flowed plentifully down his cheeks, and he took his father's hand, which he raised in silence to his lips, while the Duke said—"for the last time I forgive you Bazile; but remember it is upon certain conditions; your brother has offered to

become answerable for your future conduct ; but I relieve him from the kind engagement ;—still remember you stand equally bound by the promises you allowed him to make in your name.”

Bazile was perfectly at a loss to comprehend his father’s meaning ; he did not know he had a brother ; but concluded he was either in a dream, or his father must be out of his mind ; for it did not occur to him the Duke de St. Piene and Mr. de Melac were one and the same person. He had supposed, instead of being, as he expected, introduced to his Grace, that the Duke de Civrac had led him to his father, who held some distinguished post under the minister : he therefore looked first at one, then at the other, as if for an explanation ; when Adolphus, taking his hand, “ I will explain every thing to you by and by, as I am certain you will now be every thing our father, the Duke de St. Piene, can wish.”

Bazile

Bazile felt his bosom swell with pride at this apostrophe, though he was still rather at a loss to understand his brother. He made no scruple of renewing, in the most solemn terms, his late promises.

“ I am perfectly satisfied,” said the Duke, if your actions do but correspond with your professions. I am acquainted with your late journey to Paris ; I was in the carriage which passed you on Flixcourt-hill, and enjoyed the punishment you met with ; I heard your boasting at Amiens, for I was in the next room, and knew where you resided during your stay at Paris—how you spent your time, and when and how left it ; thanks to my kind friend here. Judge how proud the Duke de Civrac and myself must have been to acknowledge the relationship : reflect, Bazile, how many times your follies have made me blush to own you were my son.”

Bazile protested his will should become his guide in future ; and having rather reco-

vered from his surprise, began to fancy he saw through every thing—the Duke de Civrac had married Ernestine—had procured his present place and title for his father-in-law. Proud of this supposed discovery, turning to Adolphus—“may I be permitted to enquire after my sister, your Grace, and to add my congratulations to those of your other acquaintance—”

“Upon being thus happily restored to my father,” said Adolphus with a smile, convinced he was unacquainted with his recent marriage; “accept mine in return upon the events of the last half hour. But as you are yet in ignorance of many things, it is necessary you should be made acquainted with, I will, with the Duke’s leave, enter into a few details that will enlighten you—repeating in a few words what the reader is already informed of respecting his father’s history.

“Well, I protest,” said Bazile, when he had concluded, “I thought you had married Ernestine.”

“And

“And now,” said the Duke de St. Piene, “I trust this agreeable discovery, for such I know you think it, will prevent your associating with such low fellows as those who accompanied you to Paris : but at the same time let me seriously desire you would not fall into the opposite extreme, as I hardly know which I despise most, a low rake, or an impertinent coxcomb, who fancies his rank gives him a right to be insolent with impunity. Your share of your mother’s fortune has purchased a feat which entitles you to the appellation of the Count de Montesson.”

Notwithstanding Bazile’s humble looks, and recent protestations, he could not help drawing himself up when he learnt these agreeable tidings ; his countenance partook of the joy he felt, and a thousand pleasing ideas rushed into his mind.

The Duke, who was a perfect judge of his disposition, saw the effect his communi-

cation had upon him, and checked some of his rising hopes by adding—"don't suppose, Bazile, because you will in future be addressed by Monsieur le Comte, and are the son of a Duke, I shall allow you to idle away your time in the lazy manner you have done since your arrival in France. You have many things to learn for the line of life I mean you to adopt, for I am certain you won't have any objection to going into the army: but depend upon it you shall rise by your merit, and learn to obey before you are permitted to command: and remember you will find the *Duke de St. Piene* a more severe father than *Mr. de Melac*, should you give me any reason to exert either my power or authority. Come, my dear Vanval, let me conduct you to the Duchess; I shall never be able to repay the obligations you have laid me under; but remember I entreat you would often put me to the test; you will ever find me as ready to serve you as you have been to serve me and mine." His Grace then expatiated very warmly upon

upon the Duchess's excellent qualities, and the regard she expressed and felt for Madame de Melac's children; and he once more warned Bazile not to disappoint the sanguine hopes she had formed of his reformation.

The youth bowed assent, and followed his brother, father, and Vanval into the saloon.

It has already been remarked, he was far from a bad figure, though rather too effeminate in his appearance; his humble looks prepossessed the Duchess very much in his favour; she received him with the utmost kindness, and presented him to the lovely Palmira, the only person present with whom he was unacquainted, and who had formed a much higher opinion than he deserved of her husband's brother. Ernestine and Clemence were very glad to see him, and Madame de Franval welcomed his arrival with her usual cordiality.

After the first compliments, the Duchefs engaged him in difcourfe, and tried by her unaffected familiarity to ingratiate herfelf into his efteem; during which Clemence approached Adolphus, who was leaning over the back of Palmira's chair, addreffing him in a low voice—"how fhould I have liked to have been in your place for the laft half hour, Duke; how did Bazile look when he learnt our father was fo great a man? do, dear fifter, taking the hand of the fmiling Palmira, make him tell us all that paffed this afternoon."

Adolphus laughed at his lovely fifter, and promifed to oblige her, juft to convince her Bazile was now truly deferving her efteem.

"Oh, I dare fay he made a thoufand promifes in a breath," faid fhe; "but time only will difcover whether he means to keep them. I know he is reflecting more upon
his

his new title now, than what the Duchefs is faying to him.

The appearance of the maitre d'hotel who came to announce that dinner was upon table, put a ftop to Clemence's volubility; and the whole party adjourned into the eating room: and as Bazile was totally reinstated in his father's good graces, he had an elegant apartment allotted him, and a valet and footman already engaged, entered upon their refpective duties.

At first Bazile thought himfelf the happiest of mortals; addreffed as my Lord, and to have fervants obedient to his orders, was a luxury he had never yet enjoyed; but he foon began to draw comparifons between himfelf and his brother; he had a houfe, numerous fuite, and a variety of carriages at his command; and ftill fo much his fuperior, he was forced to treat him with the greateft refpect, which was truly mortifying to the newly-created Count. Befides he could not

After the first compliments, the Duchess engaged him in discourse, and tried by her unaffected familiarity to ingratiate herself into his esteem; during which Clemence approached Adolphus, who was leaning over the back of Palmira's chair, addressing him in a low voice—"how should I have liked to have been in your place for the last half hour, Duke; how did Bazile look when he learnt our father was so great a man? do, dear sister, taking the hand of the smiling Palmira, make him tell us all that passed this afternoon."

Adolphus laughed at his lovely sister, and promised to oblige her, just to convince her Bazile was now truly deserving her esteem.

"Oh, I dare say he made a thousand promises in a breath," said she; "but time only will discover whether he means to keep them. I know he is reflecting more upon
his

his new title now, than what the Duchefs is faying to him.

The appearance of the maitre d'hotel who came to announce that dinner was upon table, put a ftop to Clemence's volubility; and the whole party adjourned into the eating room: and as Bazile was totally reinstated in his father's good graces, he had an elegant apartment allotted him, and a valet and footman already engaged, entered upon their refpective duties.

At first Bazile thought himself the happiest of mortals; addreffed as my Lord, and to have fervants obedient to his orders, was a luxury he had never yet enjoyed; but he soon began to draw comparifons between himself and his brother; he had a house, numerous fuite, and a variety of carriages at his command; and still fo much his fuperior, he was forced to treat him with the greateft refpect, which was truly mortifying to the newly-created Count. Besides he could not

dazzle any of his former friends with his present splendor ; and, notwithstanding his father's remonstrances, he would have enjoyed looking down upon Berenger, and some of his English companions. He however knew it would be useless to murmur, so endeavoured to bear his mortification with the best face he could assume.

Palmira had now been upwards of a fortnight an inhabitant of the Minister's hotel, and had made an interest in the hearts of the whole family ; the dignified, yet gentle, artless simplicity of her manners, and the excellence of her heart and temper, made her universally beloved and esteemed. Ernestine and Clemence were particularly attached to her, and each looked up to her as a model worthy of imitation. As for Bazile he would have paid the profoundest respect to Madame de St. Piene's monkey, had she kept one ; he was therefore particularly polite to her favourite Palmira.

Adolphus,

Adolphus, of course, spent the greater part of the day at his father's; and in the evening, though the secret was still strictly observed, and Palmira was so soon to be introduced into the beau monde, her family were the only visitors the Duchess chose to receive. Ermance was often with her sister, as her visits to Palmira afforded her an opportunity of seeing Adolphus, who for obvious reasons, seldom visited at the hotel de Neufpont.

Selicourt still paid his court to Ermance; and the preparations for the double marriages were in great forwardness. He often accompanied her to the Minister's hotel, and with all the art and finesse he was master of, endeavoured to convince Palmira she was the magnet that drew him thither so frequently; but she either did not or would not understand him; he rather hoped it was the former, and determined to speak plainer, but unfortunately he never could meet with her alone.

Palmira had no idea of love for any other man than the one she had been taught to look up to as a superior being; and her regard for her husband increased daily; in short, whether present or absent he was always uppermost in her thoughts.

Ermance soon penetrated her lover's design, and began to hate him most cordially, though she secretly wished he might succeed, while she thought there was a possibility it might be in her power to console Adolphus for her sister's defection.

Bazile was no sooner introduced to Selicourt, than he thought him the most amiable man he had ever seen; his dress struck him in particular, and his carriage was just such a one as he meant to have when he was his own master. This induced him to cultivate the Count's friendship with the most unremitting attention. The gay coxcomb was first flattered, then amused by his behaviour.

Bazile,

Bazile, as has been already proved, was no Machiavel. The Count therefore, thinking he might be of essential service to him in the plan he had in view, and affected a simularity of sentiments in his favour, and in a very short time became his confident; and finding he was now doing penance for his past follies, the Count laughed at the promises he had made his father; told him all such nonsense was mere words of course; declared Bazile was the counterpart of himself, and the Duke de St. Piene of his old father: asked him if he thought Adolphus was as sanctified among his own friends as before the Duke and Duchefs.

Bazile protested he believed he was, as he led a most regular life at Dunkirk before the late discovery had taken place.

“ So do I, my dear friend, when with my regiment; I am a colonel as well as Adolphus, and equally obliged to set my inferior officers a good example. But at Paris the
Duke

Duke de Civrac is no faint, believe me ; more fool if he was, with his income and totally his own master. His marriage, like mine, is the mere result of family arrangements ; our hearts are not concerned in that business ; and your brother has disposed of his in favour of a beautiful girl he has lately taken into keeping. You see I put the greatest faith in your discretion ; he thinks you too young to let you into his secrets. I find you have a heart as prone to mischief as any of us gay souls ; but keep up appearances with the old folks, Bazile, keep up appearance ; follow your brother's example in that respect ; it is excellent fun to dupe such good souls."

" True, true, my dear friend," said the delighted Bazile ; " but is it not very hard I am obliged to dedicate my mornings to studying tactics and fortification, because I am going into the army ?"

" Why, your father has strange notions, my dear fellow ; and Adolphus has conned over all those stupid lessons—so have I ;
there

there is no remedy but patience. In another month I will introduce you to a set of bucks, who will learn you how to spend your evenings; at present I am rather confined myself.

This promise gained him the heart of Bazile; who, without knowing it, became, by the Count's artful insinuations, a sort of spy upon the actions of Adolphus, who was very much in Selicourt's way; if he was not with Palmira when the Count when in, he was sure to make his appearance in the course of a few minutes; a sure sign the Count told Bazile he was jealous, and it would be excellent fun to torment him a little; a very short time would now put it out of the Count's power to exert his talents for intrigue, once the husband of Ermance, it would no longer be of any use to try to gain the heart of Palmira.

An opportunity offered, which revived all his former hopes. Bazile informed him, he
4 had

had heard his father and mother talk about the latter's going to the Mont St. Michel in Normandy, to examine a state prisoner; and at all events he understood Adolphus would be absent two or three nights.

Selicourt was delighted with this intelligence, though he did not chuse to communicate all the pleasure it gave him to Bazile; merely hinted, he should like of all things to have half an hour's private conversation with Palmira, just to learn her opinion of the Duke: she seemed a poor, weak, silly, girl, but he should soon discover whether she was in love with her intended spouse; mentioned her former intentions of taking the veil, which she had reluctantly given up to oblige her relations, when it was found Ermanance would not supply her place; laughed very heartily at the consternation her declaration in his favour had occasioned; and assured him Adolphus was still in love with her; "therefore if I can but pique her sufficiently she will, ten to one, turn her thoughts towards

wards him ; and as for me, I care so little for either sister ; I would toss up for them to-morrow if he chose."

Bazile enjoyed the idea of promoting any mischief, or any thing to derange his father's wife dispositions ; therefore engaged so far to promote his friend's scheme as to procure him an interview with Palmira, by introducing him privately after the family was in bed.

The Count smiled at this excess of zeal ; but assured him he did not wish to put his friendship to so severe a test ; he only entreated he would let him know if Palmira should chance to be left at home alone, or with his sisters during the Duke's absence : in the latter case, Bazile must undertake to amuse them, while he founded the bride elect.

Bazile, by no means conscious how deficient he was in point of talents for such sort
of

of intrigues, promised to remove every obstacle which might stand in the Count's way ; he would even, if he found no other means of gratifying his desires, intreat Palmira to grant his brother, who should be just returned, a few minutes private audience, and introduce the Count in his stead.

Selicourt desired him to do nothing rashly, and promised to spend the following day at a neighbouring coffee-house, where Bazile could give him instant notice of Palmira's being alone ; but on that day on which Adolphus left Paris, the Dukes and three young ladies dined and spent the evening with Madame des Ormes. On the next, the Minister told the Dukes he should set out for Versailles as soon as he had breakfasted, and did not expect to be at home till late ; it was therefore settled, that the Dukes and the young folks should dine with the Dowager Dukes.

Bazile

Bazile was very much vexed, and immediately dispatched a note to communicate this disagreeable intelligence to the Count; but hoped, as they must return early, an opportunity might occur in the course of the evening.

Palmira had promised to have some private conversation with Ermance during the day; and as soon as she understood they were to dine at the Val de Grace, she sent her word she could not see her before seven o'clock, but would devote the whole evening to her.

Ermance was excessively disappointed, as she had fully determined to open her heart to her sister during the Duke's absence; but sent an answer back by the servant to entreat she would return as early as possible from her dinner visit, as she had something of the utmost importance to talk over with her.

Palmira

Palmira wondered what this mighty secret could be, but sent her sister word she might depend upon her being at home, and ready to receive her by half past six, at latest. She then shewed the note to the Duchess, who said she would return home by herself, and spend the evening *tete-a-tete* with her sister, as she and her daughter would take the opportunity to pay a few necessary, but very formal visits.

Bazile overheard this arrangement, and sent a second note to the Count to inform him, if he could but get the start of Ermance, he might entertain Palmira as long as he pleased, for he would be in the way to receive the former, and would assure her Palmira was not yet returned, and so prevent her from breaking in upon them.

The Count paid him a short visit upon receipt of his last message, and gave him every proper instruction upon the occasion, as it was particularly necessary there should not seem to be any collusion among them.

CHAP.

CHAP XIII.

ADOLPHUS, ever eager to serve his king and his father, or his friends, never stopped till he reached the place of his destination; soon finished the business he went upon, and returned with equal speed. He reached Paris the day after he had left, and before his father was returned from Versailles, drove to his own hotel, and from thence walked to the Minister's, entered by a private door he had had the key of since his marriage, and not finding the Duke in his study, and being informed by one of his secretaries where the ladies had dined, went

up a small staircase communicating with Palmira's dressing room, where he determined to wait her return. There was a good fire, and a Turkey sofa, as in most French *Boudoirs*, in a recess, covered by an elegant canopy : he sat down near the fire ; but as it was too dark to read, and not chusing to ring for lights, and finding himself very much fatigued, he flung himself upon the sofa, thinking they might make it late before they returned ; and the profound silence that reigned throughout the hotel, soon made him forget himself ; he had let the curtains down over him, fearful of catching cold, and because he wished to enjoy the surprise of Palmira when she came in and found him returned so much sooner than she expected him.

He had not lain long before he was awoke by somebody in the room putting the fire to rights ; he concluded it was one of the servants, but put by the curtain to have a peep, and saw Palmira taking a chair, and dismissing

ing

ing her maid, who had placed lights upon the table. He was afraid of jumping up, lest he might alarm her; and was deliberating how he should discover himself, when he heard a gentle tap at the door, which induced him to lie still till he found who this unwelcome intruder was. Palmira called out, "Come in Ermance, how can you be so ceremonious?"

She was proceeding, when the appearance of the Count de Selicourt, adorned for conquest, cut her phrase.—"It is not your sister, my charming Palmira," was his first words, shutting the door after him.

Palmira, of whose countenance the Duke had a very full view through the opening of the curtains, looked excessively surprised, and said, "where is Ermance, Count, and what has prevented her from coming?"

"My guardian angel, lovely Palmira," said Selicourt, seizing her hand; "but don't
be

be uneasy, she will most probably be here by and by."

Adolphus never felt himself less inclined to move; a sentiment he would not have chosen to acknowledge made him hardly breathe: besides, as matters stood, he reflected it would seem very strange were he to be discovered concealed in Mademoiselle de Moncove's dressing-room. He longed very much to have boxed the Count's ears; but fearful of giving way to that propensity, he determined to wait with patience the issue of the visit; it was at all events very unexpected. He had the satisfaction to discover the Count reached a chair for Palmira, and placed another for himself near it; and thinking he should not have much time allowed him to display his eloquence, he declared his invincible passion for her in the most florid pompous terms. "Pity alone, adorable Palmira, induced me to accede to the Marquis de Neufpont's proposals in favour of Ermance; my heart at that time
was

was perfectly free ; I had not yet seen you— you, who are doomed to make me the most fortunate or most miserable of human beings. May I hope a wish to oblige your parents has induced you to receive the vows of your——I won't say *present lover*, because that is a sentiment the Duke de Civrac would most likely scorn to acknowledge ; at least I am convinced he never felt its influence, if I am not deceived."

Palmira, having listened with wonder and astonishment, now interrupted him ;—"are you in your right senses, Count, or what does all this nonsense mean ?"

"I am raving, lovely Palmira, actually raving mad, most charming of your sex, when I reflect so much beauty, and such rare accomplishments, may fall to the lot of that insensible marble-hearted Duke de Civrac : you are but little acquainted with the man whom you are doomed to wed : you have, no doubt, been kept in ignorance of the violent passion he professed for your sister,

when he learned you intended to take the veil; and he has now, with equal ease, transferred his vows and stock of love-phrases to you. Since your fortune will in all probability be much larger than your sister's, his real devoirs are paid to the castle of Quesnoy and the adjacent lands, his ostensible ones to your beauty."

"Palmira had come to a determination to hear the Count out; but, losing all patience, she exclaimed—"I am perfectly at a loss, Count, to fathom your meaning, and hope I have misunderstood you. I know that my *present lover*, the Duke de Civrac, was very much struck with my sister; and probably had their sentiments been reciprocal, she would by this time have borne his name. But whatever might be my motives for taking the veil, I was not actuated by any dislike towards his Grace, whose character and moral principles I ever revered before a greater intimacy induced me to dispose of my heart in his favour. I am thus
candid

candid, because you might suppose caprice, not choice, led me to the altar. I have every reason to believe you have endeavoured to persuade my sister you were very much in love with her; but I don't wish to make any enquiries into the state of your heart; therefore, as we can have nothing farther to say to each other at present, and as I am not in the habit of receiving visitors, particularly from gentlemen who do not come in a general way to the rest of the family, allow me to wish you a good evening; and let me hope your future conduct to my sister, will induce me to forget what I am sorry to say has not raised you in my esteem."

The Count lost great part of his assurance; but protested he would not leave her till she had pronounced his pardon.

"You ought to be satisfied with what I have already said, Count; I do not wish a person to whom I am, and expect soon to

be nearer related, lessened in the opinions of any of my family."

"Amiable Palmira, every word you utter increases my regret; can you blame me for the involuntary homage my heart has forced me to pay your charms."

"Don't force me to despise you Count," said the now indignant Palmira; pray leave me, your visit is as improper as it is unwelcome. Surely my behaviour during our short intimacy has not given reason to suppose you might take such liberties with impunity,"

Selicourt, finding it in vain to hope to bring her into his way of thinking, now only wished to make an honourable retreat. He summoned all his wonted assurance to his assistance, began to laugh, and asked her if she really thought him in earnest? "you have lived in a convent, and imbibed so many monastic notions, my dear cousin, you can't understand a joke."

“Such absurd levity is still more disagreeable than your former behaviour, Count; therefore if you don’t chuse to retire, I shall ring the bell.”

The Count caught her hand, and by way of making a last effort to convince her of his passion, pressed it so hard she was nearly screaming out with pain, and so provoked her she fairly made a catch at the bell. The matter was now become too serious to allow him to leave the room without having obtained her promise to bury all that passed in oblivion: he therefore stepped between her and the bell, and threw himself upon one knee before her. At that moment the door flew open, and in came Ermance, calling out—“Oh, my dear Palmira——” There she stopped, and stood rivetted to the spot.

Adolphus (who had thought of shewing himself every moment for the last ten minutes, only every succeeding instant increased the esteem and admiration he

felt for his now beloved Palmira, and restrained him kicking the worthless Count down stairs,) seized this moment of general consternation to slip from the sofa; and, as the door was still open, Ermance and Palmira almost fancied he had followed the former: but Selicourt was still kneeling opposite to his Grace. Appearances, however, seemed to break the spell that had hitherto rendered the others motionless. Palmira snatched away her hand, and sprung into his arms; and the Count jumped up and burst into a most violent fit of laughing, flung himself into a chair, holding his sides.

This strange behaviour made Ermance look first at one, then at the other, with increased wonder and amaze; neither knowing nor hardly guessing what all this meant. At last she said—"So, good folks, I am arrived just in time for the conclusion of your farce; was it performed to excite my jealousy? if so, it has missed it's aim.

Palmira

Palmira having given way to her momentary joy, dreaded the consequence of her Adolphus having overheard any part of the Count's discourse, or even having caught him in so improper an attitude, as she perceived his eyes almost darted fire, while he contemplated the Count in the height of his affected mirth. Indeed the Duke hardly knew what to think, and was very much at a loss to guess what the Count wished them to understand. At last the latter was able to exclaim, wiping his eyes while he spoke, "I never succeeded better in my life; even Palmira began to be staggered."

"Well," said Ermance, "I suppose by and by I shall hear what you seem to pride yourself so much upon, Count, elucidated; for at present I am wofully in the dark. I thought you had been alone, Palmira.—When did your Grace return?"

"Not more than half an hour ago, madam," said Adolphus.

The Count presumed he must have come in privately, as Bazile had assured him there was no soul but Palmira at home when he arrived. Having had his laugh out, to allow himself time for reflection, he said, "I never took three people in so well in my life; I must go upon the stage: it does not signify, I was born an actor."

"I believe you were," said Ermance, who now began really to think the whole was a joke.

Though Adolphus was by no means the dupe of the flimsy artifice, still as his passion abated, he tried for many reasons, situated as they both were, to affect to credit what he said; therefore, with as much indifference as he could assume, told him if his talents were known, he would be offered very liberal terms.

Palmira, who had been very much hurt, and was convinced he had not began in joke, remained silent.

Selicourt

Selicourt thus illustrated:—"I saw you returning alone in the Duchefs's carriage, my dear little sister, just as I reached this hotel, and followed you in ; I was going to the hotel de Neuspont, but determined just to enquire after your health before I proceeded, in hopes you would make me the bearer of a message to your sister ; for though my heart has been at the hotel de Neuspont these two days, I have been prevented from paying my accustomed devoirs ; but a multiplicity of business must plead my excuse : however, the moment I entered this room, I heard something move upon the sofa ; convinced it was either your Grace or Ermance, I determined to punish whichever of you had chose to hide yourselves ; but in a few seconds I discovered who was playing at hide and seek, and this confirmed me in my resolution. And as you gave me to understand, Mademoiselle, you expected your sister, depend upon it you would not have got rid of me, till one, or both, had made their appearance. I heard Ermance hastening

towards the door, and the moment I heard her hand upon the lock, I was upon my knee. My levity may appear inexcusable in some respects, but you must forgive what is absolutely constitutional; and as you chose to turn spy, your Grace, you certainly deserved the little punishment you met with."

The Duke took his proffered hand, and affected to think all he had urged irrefragable arguments in extenuation of his behaviour. In fact he had no alternative, he must either have called him out, or have appeared reconciled to his folly; and as he most cordially despised him, he thought him almost beneath his serious notice. Palmira chose to follow his example; and Selicourt was even assiduously attentive to Ermance.

Adolphus explained how he came to be concealed: the Count, convinced, in a whisper,

whisper to his mistress, asked her what she thought of her peevish sister's behaviour?

Thus was Ermance's intention of declaring her aversion for him totally frustrated; and her vanity made her listen to him with something like pleasure, fearful Palmira should suppose it possible he really was in earnest.

The family soon returned home. Adolphus retired for a short time with his father, and they joined the party at supper, at which Selicourt and Ermance were present; the former took an opportunity of following Bazile out of the room, and began to abuse him for having let him be taken by surprise telling him in a few words, he had been very fortunate upon the whole.

Bazile declared Ermance must have been concealed as well as his brother, for he had
been

been upon the watch from the moment the Count went up stairs.

The unfortunate Selicourt, entangled in his own snares, and driven from all his subterfuges, had now no means left of making an honourable retreat ; the settlements were all ready for signature ; and he had been obliged, on this memorable evening, to profess the most ardent love for a woman who wished as much as he did, he plainly discovered, to break off the match ; yet, like him, could not retreat : indeed matters had gone such a length, neither could recede. Therefore rendered desperate, and with some faint hopes he should be fortunate enough to meet with a refusal, he proceeded early next morning to the hotel de Neufpont, and in the Marchioness's presence, pressed Ermance to fix the day which was to make him blest for life. His request, to his utter mortification, was instantly granted ; and the only consolation he felt was, upon being informed the Duke
had

had already parted with his liberty in favour of Palmira, and that the young couple were to be presented at Versailles in the course of the week.

During the short interval which was yet allowed him, he got Bazile to tell his youngest sister he kept two mistresses, in hopes it would reach the ears of Ermance; he was disappointed in his expectation, though Clemence thought it very likely, she did not chuse to mention it even to Palmira.

Vanity and pique now kept Ermance silent; therefore on the appointed day, with the best grace he could assume, circumstanced as he was, Selicourt led the deluded victim of his arts to the altar. The evening concluded with a magnificent *fete* given by the Marquis in honour of the double marriage.

Adolphus

Adolphus and the lovely Palmira were as happy as they deserved to be ; what more can be said of their mutual felicity ? The young Duke often assisted his father in his labours ; and when the Duke de St. Piene expressed a wish to retire, was appointed to succeed him. Ermance would have dashed into all the pleasures Paris afforded, if the Count had not often reminded her, and but too-often made her feel she had brought him little or no fortune ; angry with herself, but much more so with him, she soon grew unhappy, and envied the fortunate lot of Palmira, whose rank in society she might once have held.

Ernestine and Clemence were each distinguished by men the Duke de St. Piene thought capable of making them happy ; therefore readily consented to their wishes, and had the pleasure to find he was not deceived in the expectations he had formed. As for Bazile, he found people might be unhappy though blest with a title, and allowed
to

to wear red heels ; he was placed in a German regiment, under a very severe colonel, and forced, much against his inclinations to prosecute the studies he had began under his father's eyes, and to do his duty as an officer. In a few years the constraint he had been obliged to assume became habitual, good habits usurped the place of bad, and he became an honour to his family, and a useful member of society.

The Duke and Duchefs de St. Piene, happy in their children and themselves when restored to each other, had no further blessing to ask of Providence ; but lived respected, and died regretted by all who knew them.

F I N I S.



